

Angus Council

The Audit of Best Value and Community Planning

Prepared for the Accounts Commission

September 2004



Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000 under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. It provides services to the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission. Together they ensure that the Scottish Executive and public sector bodies in Scotland are held to account for the proper, efficient and effective use of public funds.

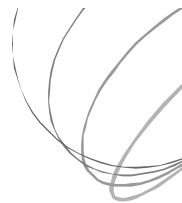
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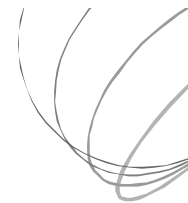


Commission findings

1. The Commission welcomes the first report on the performance of a council's statutory duties to secure Best Value and to initiate and facilitate the Community Planning process. The Commission recognises that the report gives a broad picture of the council's performance based on the work of Audit Scotland and the findings of other scrutiny bodies such as Inspectorates. While the report does not attempt a comprehensive review of all service delivery, it points the way to improvements for the future while recognising the achievements of the council to date. We acknowledge the open and constructive way in which Angus Council contributed to the work of Audit Scotland in carrying out this review.
2. Angus Council generally provides good services to the community and administers its affairs in a business-like manner. For example
 - There is a culture of fiscal prudence which safeguards public funds
 - Reports from education inspections have been very positive
 - Similarly, inspectors report that the Housing Department is delivering a good service for the overwhelming majority of users
 - Angus has the best record of waste recycling of Scottish councils
 - The condition of the roads in Angus is among the best in Scotland
 - Progress on electronic service delivery exceeds the Scottish average in most aspects.
3. We commend Angus Council for the progress which they have made in Community Planning and joint working with other public sector partners. The challenge for the council is to translate this high level work into real improvements in the delivery of services at departmental level.
4. Best Value places emphasis on strong corporate governance arrangements, and there are areas in which Angus Council can make improvements
 - Developing the themes of its Community Plan into tangible benefits for service users and the Angus community
 - Improving information provided to councillors to empower their role in scrutinising performance and ensuring that their policy objectives are being met
 - Implementing a corporate performance management system throughout the council, with more outcome based measures that focus more on customer needs and impacts
 - Improving corporate working, and moving away from departmentalism



- Translating corporate plans into measurable objectives at service level
 - Increasing the pace of change to drive forward improvements under Best Value
 - Making a greater commitment to equal opportunities at all levels of the organisation
 - Ensuring that the widest possible range of options for service delivery is considered when services are reviewed.
5. The Commission recognises and welcomes Angus Council's commitment to the need for change and development and invites the council to prepare and submit an improvement plan showing how this commitment will translate into action. We expect the improvement plan to be specific, measurable, action orientated, realistic and timed. The plan should be submitted to the Commission by 30 November 2004.



The Audit of Best Value

The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 introduced new statutory requirements for Scottish local authorities, including duties relating to Best Value and Community Planning. The Accounts Commission holds councils to account in relation to these duties, and Audit Scotland conducts the Audit of Best Value (including the other duties contained in the Act) on the Commission's behalf.

The Act is supported by more detailed guidance on Best Value and Community Planning. This includes long-established elements, such as the management of resources and accountability, but also adds new requirements on aspects such as equal opportunities and sustainable development. The statutory guidance takes a descriptive rather than a prescriptive approach to all of these issues. It aims to define and describe the goals that councils need to aim for, rather than the approach that they must take.

The scope of Best Value and Community Planning is very broad but in general terms a successful council will:

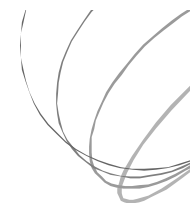
- work with all relevant organisations in its area to identify a clear set of priorities that respond to the needs of the community in both the short and the longer term
- be organised to deliver those priorities
- meet and clearly demonstrate that it is meeting the community's needs.

Traditional patterns of service delivery still have a role to play. The challenge for local government is to find new ways of working across services and with other bodies to achieve the best results for citizens and service users.

The key objectives of this audit were to:

- assess the extent to which Angus Council is meeting its duties under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, and
- agree planned improvements with the council. These will be reviewed by the council's external auditor over the next two years.

At the start of the process, the council was asked to produce a high-level self-assessment of how it is meeting its statutory duties of Best Value and Community Planning and how the services it delivers are performing. The council was also asked to identify the main areas where improvements should be made.



As Best Value and Community Planning encompass all the activities of a council it is not realistic to audit everything in depth, so we plan our detailed work in two ways:

- Where possible, we draw on the findings of other scrutiny processes, such as the work carried out by the council's external auditors and by inspectorates. These are incorporated into our report.
- We select certain aspects of the council's performance for detailed audit investigation. A wide range of sources, including the council's submission, reports issued by external audit and inspections, and national Statutory Performance Indicators, informs this selection.

This means that our audit has been tailored to reflect Angus Council's performance. The report reflects this selective approach, with detailed commentary on some areas and limited or no coverage in others. While we have made some comparisons with other councils, our overall approach has focused on performance trends and improvement within Angus Council. The report also reflects the picture available at the time our main audit work was conducted between March and May 2004.

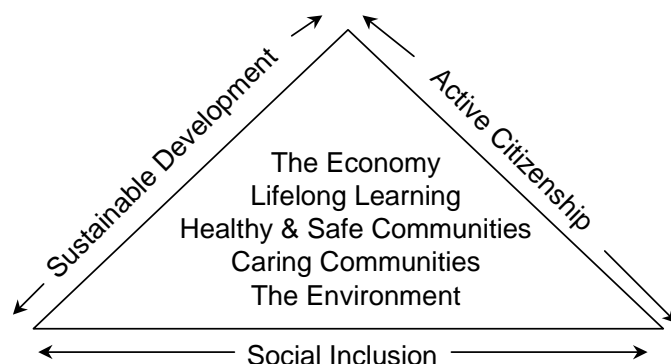


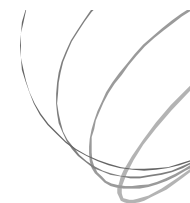
Overall conclusions

Angus Council generally provides good services for its citizens. It also performs well in activities that reflect traditional local authority management, including financial control, staff management, probity and propriety. These are important, but Best Value requires the reform of management and business practices to drive real improvements in service delivery. Angus Council has made a start on this, but it needs to increase the pace of change, particularly in improving its customer focus and in managing performance.

What is the council trying to achieve?

1. The council makes significant efforts to improve the well-being of its communities. It is committed to delivering effective local government and strong civic leadership. This is reflected in the way in which members and officers supported the audit process, working with the audit team in an open and transparent manner.
2. The council has a good foundation of joint working with other public sector and community organisations. All services within the council are aware of the benefits of joint working and are committed to pursuing joint solutions. As a result, good progress has been made on community planning in its early stages, with sound plans in place to build on this in the future. There are high levels of commitment from the partners and there is an effective approach for engaging local communities in identifying the priorities for community planning.
3. Angus Council has set out a vision for the area through both the Angus Community Plan and the Council Corporate Plan. Elected members exercise leadership by playing a full role in developing these key documents.
4. The Community Plan has three main principles and five themes:

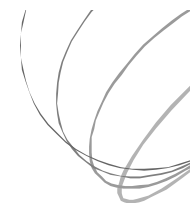




5. The current Corporate Plan was approved by the council in December 2003 and builds on the Community Plan's themes and principles. It seeks to focus attention on customers and residents, committing the council to the delivery of effective, efficient and accessible services. The plan lists the actions that the council will take to pursue the Community Plan's themes. It also describes action to manage the council's business more effectively, and to improve local access to services through the use of information and communication technologies.
6. These plans address many of the challenges that face the Angus community, although in a number of instances they are imprecise and do not offer a clear blueprint for action. They would be improved by increased focus on the expected outcomes for services users. There is also a need to monitor results more effectively.
7. When the council was established in 1996, it adopted a traditional approach to managing its affairs in response to the transitional pressures of local government reorganisation. The council continued to adopt a cautious evolutionary approach to change based on its perception of being in a relatively strong position in terms of the national Statutory Performance Indicators.
8. Examples of shifts on any significant scale to new ways of working or thinking are limited, and historically there has been some resistance to change. This is not consistent with the new approaches in public sector management that Best Value and Community Planning require.
9. There has, however, been significant progress on key issues since the 2003 election, and this offers senior management an opportunity to increase the pace of reform and development. It will be important to ensure that corporate management is strong enough and that individual projects achieve their goals. It will also be important for those at service level to respond effectively to corporate initiatives and priorities.

Is the council responding to local people?

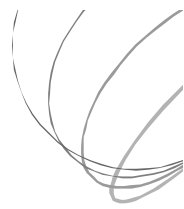
10. The council has been developing a number of approaches to make its services more responsive to the needs of its local communities and to involve them in planning for service improvements. These include: the Angus Citizens' Panel, the Angus Young Citizens' Panel, the Angus Youth Congress, Youth Councils, Dialogue Youth Initiative, and joint consultation exercises with community planning partners. The council also supports Community Councils, Area Forums, and local partnerships.
11. Some of these initiatives are at a fairly early stage, and the council must drive them forward corporately to ensure that they are fully implemented, and that services respond to the feedback generated. The council recognises the need to continue with progress and has plans to improve corporate coordination and monitoring.



12. Generally, there is a lack of regular and systematic reporting on the customer perspective in services, making it difficult to assess their responsiveness. Departments are largely meeting the various targets set by councillors and outlined in service plans, but these relate mainly to processes and projects rather than improvements to services as experienced by users so their impacts are difficult to measure or monitor.
13. There are some areas of the council where significant efforts are being made. For example, the Social Work and Health Department has well developed systems for consulting users and carers. These could be further improved if better ways of telling people about the outcomes of consultation could be established.
14. In general, reporting back on performance is an area where the council has significant scope for improvement. Progress is hampered by the need to improve performance measurement and management systems. The council needs to respond to the statutory guidance on performance reporting and accountability, establishing a system that is comprehensive, accurate and balanced.
15. The council's information on the types of services available and what to expect from them is generally good and a significant amount of the council's material is "Crystal Marked" for Plain English. The council also has a very useful website, with a comprehensive A-Z section and an impressive score against independently judged accessibility criteria.

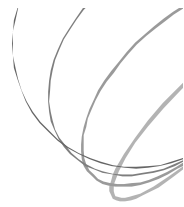
Can the council deliver Best Value?

16. The management approach taken since 1996 means that Angus Council has been soundly managed and has organised its affairs in a business-like manner. There is evidence of good performance in a number of activities, and there is no evidence of any area of major risk. For example, the council has an effective and prudent approach to financial control, together with some good human resource management practice including staff surveys, exit interviews and a well-established staff appraisal scheme.
17. The council has a target for all departments to achieve Investors in People (IIP) status by 2005. This is a national accreditation scheme, covering a wide range of personnel practices such as staff appraisal and development and communication, and is generally reviewed as a robust indicator of sound staff management. At present eight of the council's 12 departments (including the largest departments, Education and Social Work & Health) have achieved IIP status. In addition, Angus council leads local government in Scotland in the number of Gold Awards held under the Scottish Health at Work Scheme.
18. The council has adopted the Local Government Code of Corporate Governance recommended by CIPFA, CoSLA and SOLACE and this is developing well. In 2003, both the chief executive and the



council's internal audit service carried out reviews of the council's arrangements against the code, recommending areas for action and improvement. The council also established an effective Risk Management Strategy and Implementation Plan in October 2003; this will embed risk management in the council's processes, and develop corporate and departmental risk registers.

19. In response to new statutory duties under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, the council has reviewed its arrangements and made plans to address key gaps. The council demonstrates a commitment to the concepts of Best Value and Community Planning, such as continuous improvement and joint working. Guidance and support for services developed by corporate management are good, accessible and up-to-date.
20. However, much of the corporate framework for Best Value has not been rolled out effectively throughout the authority. Significant variations in standards and approaches can be found across services. It is reasonable to allow service managers a degree of flexibility in the application of corporate arrangements, and any corporate framework must recognise the management requirements of individual service activities, but minimum standards have to be reached.
21. The council has still to implement fully some of the essential elements for success in Best Value. For example, despite significant time and effort since 1999, there is still some way to go in the development of an effective corporate performance management system for the council. Many of the key building blocks are in place. These include: the Community Plan Progress Report and Review; the Annual Report and Accounts; Service Plan Progress Reports; appraisal interviews and one-to-one meetings between the chief executive and chief officers; monitoring reports to committee; the local code of corporate governance annual review and audit process; statutory performance indicator reports; internal and external audit reports; benchmarking information; best value review reports; and use of the balanced scorecard. However, work is needed on improving the links and coherence between them, as well as improving customer focus and measuring outcomes for service users.
22. Similarly, despite appropriate corporate guidance being in place, the range of options that might be available to deliver higher standards of service has not been systematically considered. Where plans for significant change have been agreed, such as the establishment of a modernised management structure, there is no firm timescale for implementation. The leadership of elected members will be important in addressing these issues.
23. Best Value requires elected members to have a firm grasp (at an appropriate strategic level) of how services are performing across the council. They are expected to challenge managers to demonstrate that policy priorities are being pursued effectively, that continuous improvement is being sought, and that value for money is being achieved. There are some opportunities for elected members to consider performance through service planning and to monitor the conclusions of reviews, but the lack



of a systematic performance management framework and regular performance reporting to Committee limits the ability of members to scrutinise performance effectively.

24. Best Value also requires corporate discipline, to avoid departmentalism and ensure that key priorities remain the focus of attention. Better links are needed between the allocation of resources through the budget process and the policy priorities expressed by the council in its strategies and plans.
25. Following the 2003 council elections, the council has agreed a report produced by the chief executive entitled Responding to Change, which sets out a systematic approach to the modernisation agenda. The council sees the implementation of this report – parts of which have already been put into effect – as fundamental to the process of continuous improvement. The report picks up on seven strategic priorities identified at a corporate seminar involving members and officers. These are shown at exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1

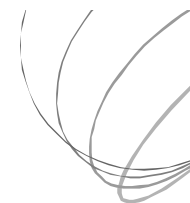
During a corporate seminar in the council, seven strategic priorities for management to address were identified.

- Moving to a more responsive style of management, with emphasis on encouraging new ideas and fostering a “can do” approach where creativity, motivation, support and encouragement are part and parcel of what we are about.
- Finance being the servant of the Council’s strategy, not the driver.
- Reacting positively to the implementation of the Local Government in Scotland Act which lays certain duties on the Council in respect of Best Value and Community Planning, and gives the Council “a power to advance wellbeing”.
- Giving particular attention to customer relations.
- Recognising the potential of information and communications technology radically to alter the way in which we link with our customers, who will want to contact the council how, where and when it suits them – and not the council – best.
- Giving serious attention to the management development requirements involved.
- Giving more attention to the theme of valuing staff as the council’s most important asset.

Source: Angus Council

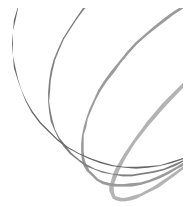
How do services perform?

26. Angus Council’s record across the Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) has historically been good, but several indicators show a decline and these will require active intervention to bring them



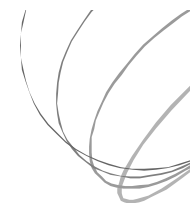
back on course. It is difficult to articulate other performance trends due to the limitations of the performance management system. The council needs to emphasise to all of its services that an effective and systematic performance management system is of critical importance if corporate and service objectives are to be achieved.

27. Overall there is sound evidence to show that the council is providing a good education service. The HMIE/Audit Scotland inspection in 2002 found good or very good performance on all eleven quality indicators (the top two of four grades). Sustained improvement has taken place since the initial inspection, and a recent follow up visit found good progress in all areas originally identified for action.
28. Social work and health services are generally well managed with no major areas of concern. In common with most councils, there is limited performance information available to provide an overview, but there is evidence of good performance in terms of low levels of delayed discharge, effective services for children and families, and improved training arrangements. The department's overall effectiveness in joint working has been recognised by the Scottish Executive in their annual evaluation statement of the Angus Local Partnership Agreement for 2003-04, which stated that their joint future arrangements are "well progressed". Key areas in need of attention include the balance and flexibility of community care services, which some of the SPIs highlight. The department recognises the need to shift the balance of care and has already started to address this area.
29. There is evidence that the council is providing a good housing service for the majority of users. A recent inspection by Communities Scotland looked at the services provided by the council in the areas of housing management, property management and services for homeless people. A four grade system is used – excellent, good, fair, and poor. Housing and property management services were both judged to be good with homeless services considered to be fair. Strengths include a stock of housing in good condition, relatively low rents and good levels of tenant satisfaction. Main weaknesses reflect common problems across the council, such as performance monitoring, public reporting and equalities. Significant attention needs to be given to a number of aspects of the service provided for homeless people.
30. The Benefits Fraud Inspectorate has reported solid progress in responding to inspection results, but there are still concerns about the time taken to process benefits applications and payments. The council is taking steps to address this, but continuing delays in processing benefits will contribute to increases in rent arrears.
31. There is limited performance information for leisure services, but there is no evidence of any serious concerns. Both main divisions of the service deploy national quality standard schemes. All leisure centres and swimming pools hold the Quest quality accreditation. The six council museums and galleries are registered under the Museums and Galleries Commission Scheme. There is relatively high usage of the council's swimming pools and indoor sports facilities. Attendance levels in theatres



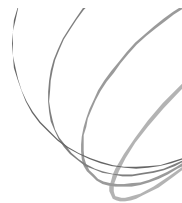
and halls managed by the council have increased significantly during the last five years. Use of computer terminals in Angus's libraries is above the Scottish average.

32. No in-depth audit work was carried out for planning and transport services, but there is some evidence to show sound performance. Although limited, the department's balanced scorecard system provides an overall picture, and the department appears to be committed to continuous improvement with some success. In 2000, the Scottish Executive's Planning Audit Unit assessed the council's approach to development planning as "well organised and efficient". Performance in the processing of planning applications has recently deteriorated to around the national average. The council performs better than the national average on most aspects of processing building warrants and certificates.
33. The condition of the roads in Angus is among the best in Scotland, and recent increases in funding will provide an opportunity for further improvement. Performance on repairs to street lighting has fallen sharply over the past year or so to well below the Scottish average; weaknesses in resource management appear to be the reason for this. An improvement action plan has been put in place to address this situation and the council reports that the Statutory Performance Indicator is now on an upward trend. In common with the overall picture across the council, the systematic reporting of performance to members in these areas requires attention.
34. There is evidence of sound performance in environmental and consumer protection services. Waste management is a key strength, with Angus the top performer among Scottish councils in terms of waste recycling. Other activities perform at average levels, but there is a commitment to improvement and steady progress is being made. Former CCT defined activities have recently been brought within the environmental and consumer protection management structure and this provides an opportunity for the council to review its arrangements for these activities.
35. Economic development is a priority area for the council and the Community Planning Partnership. Success requires effective partnership working and Angus Council is well placed to build on its overall strengths in this area. It is too early to assess the impact of the council's Economic Development Strategy, but the arrangements for policy development and performance monitoring provide a sound basis.
36. The council can demonstrate a number of strengths in cross-cutting issues, such as the foundations in place to contribute to sustainable development, a commitment to young people as evidenced by the council's leading role in Scotland on the Dialogue Youth Initiative, and the development of e-government where progress on electronic service delivery exceeds the Scottish average in most aspects. However, the council needs to push ahead corporately on equal opportunities issues across all levels of the organisation. While a number of policies and strategies are in place, the council does not systematically monitor its performance or the impact of these policies in the community.



What needs to improve?

37. There are a number of key areas in which improvements are needed in Angus Council, although these will tend to be shared by other councils in Scotland. Most of these were identified by the council in its self-assessment for the audit.
38. Continuous improvement lies at the heart of Best Value and Community Planning and local authorities must develop an improvement culture across all areas of service. Officers and elected members must be fully focused on responding to policy, customers and communities, establishing an operating environment in which improvement can be clearly identified and comfortably discussed. Angus Council is beginning to develop an improvement culture and become more open to change. It is responsive to improvement recommendations arising from audit and inspection, but it is important that the council takes ownership of improvement itself, driving change across all activities in a systematic and comprehensive manner.
39. There have been limited shifts to more modern approaches to public sector management, and there is now scope for Angus Council to pick up the pace at which Best Value is implemented and to realise greater benefits. More consideration is required of alternative ways of working, of new ways of delivering services and of how things are done elsewhere.
40. Links between service plans and the objectives set out in the Corporate Plan could be improved. Service plans need to express a clearer commitment to improvements for customers and users. The council should continue to develop the links between policy priorities, service planning, resource allocations and budgets.
41. In general, better project implementation is needed. The intended benefits would be clearer, and results achieved more readily, if more explicit targets for outcomes were set.
42. More systematic measurement and monitoring of performance is required at all levels in the authority. In particular improvements in this area will help address the implementation problems associated with the balanced scorecard, ensuring effective ownership and commitment throughout the council.
43. Producing 'baseline' performance reports for all services to the end of 2003/04 would help the council to identify how it is currently performing. Challenging action plans could then be established for all service activities to drive improvements. Better use of benchmarking or other comparative analysis is needed to assess the level at which services could be performing.



44. Performance needs to be reported internally and externally in accordance with statutory guidance. This will require a range of methods designed to suit the particular purpose and audience concerned. The establishment of clear corporate standards for reporting service performance to committees will assist elected members in performing their scrutiny role effectively.
45. Action is needed to ensure greater consistency across the council on equal opportunities. Coordination, action planning and monitoring are required to ensure policy in these areas has an impact.
46. The council currently has plans for improvement, in particular plans to address the specific requirements of Best Value and Community Planning. While these respond, in the main, to the priority areas in need of attention, it will be important for the council to provide the corporate discipline necessary for effective implementation.
47. Following consideration of this report by the Accounts Commission, Angus Council will be asked to agree an Action Plan, detailing its intended improvements. In the course of the next two years, the council's appointed external auditor will carry out follow-up audit work to establish progress on each of the agreed improvement actions.



Part 1: What is the council trying to achieve?

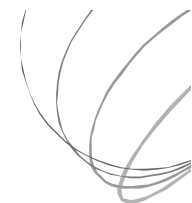
Elected members and senior managers need to demonstrate commitment and leadership by developing a vision of how Best Value will contribute to the corporate goals of the authority. This vision should inform the direction of services and be communicated effectively to staff. Members should have a vision of where they see the council's services in 3-5 years' time.

The audit focused on the council's vision, expressed through the Community Plan and corporate and service plans. Cross-cutting issues which contribute to best value, including equal opportunities and sustainable development, were examined. Finally the approach to community planning was considered.

Angus Council has well-established procedures to develop its strategic direction and has set out its vision for Angus through the Community Plan and the council Corporate Plan. Elected members play a full role in developing these key documents. More focused attention needs to be given to how plans affect service users. While community planning includes outcome targets, improvement is needed in corporate and service planning procedures to monitor whether outcomes are being achieved. This will assist scrutiny and public accountability.

Introduction

48. Angus is a medium size council with a population of roughly 108,000. It has a mixture of urban and rural communities. The main population centres are in the seven burghs of Arbroath, Brechin, Carnoustie, Forfar, Kirriemuir, Monifieth, and Montrose. Forfar is the administrative centre, where the council's headquarters are located.
49. The unemployment rate for the area is below the Scottish average of 3%, although there are pockets of deprivation as well as some affluent areas within the council's boundaries. People in Angus work mainly in the public sector or in distribution, hotels and restaurants.
50. The age profile for Angus is broadly in line with that of Scotland as a whole. The overall population figures for the area are predicted to remain reasonably constant over the next 20 years, but the proportion of the population over 75 is likely to increase significantly. This has obvious implications for services for older people.
51. The council has twenty-nine elected members and, following the local elections in May 2003, continues to have an SNP majority.

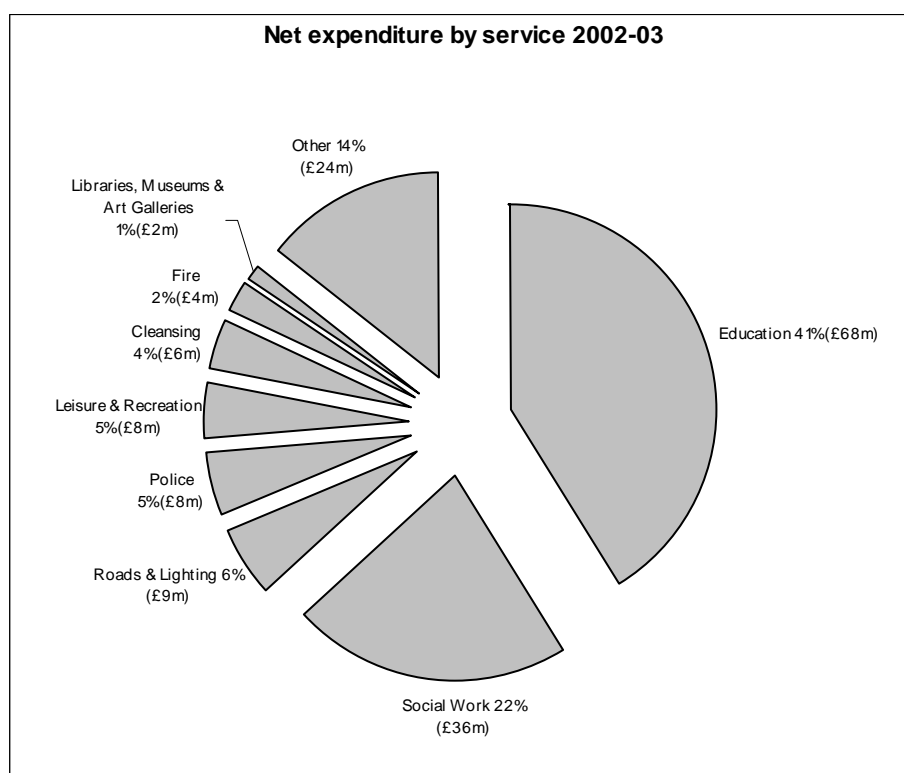


52. Angus spent £165 million on services in 2002/03 which places it around the middle of the range of mainland authorities. By comparison Glasgow spent £1.2 billion and Clackmannanshire £75 million. Exhibit 2 shows how expenditure was split between services.

Exhibit 2

Analysis of the council's net expenditure in 2002-03

The council spent £165 million on services in 2002-03.



Source: CIPFA Rating Review – Actuals of Income and Expenditure 2002-2003

53. Some of the key features of Best Value have been in place in Angus Council since its establishment, such as a commitment to linking service activity to the needs of the community and ensuring that individual staff contribute effectively to departmental service plans. This reflects the significant efforts made by the council to engage its communities and involve them in its work.
54. Elected members are involved in policy and service planning at appropriate stages, and recent improvements to key processes such as service and budget planning will improve the effectiveness of their involvement.



The Angus Community Plan

The Angus Community Plan sets out a ten-year strategy, with a series of targets grouped into five main themes. The council's existing plans and strategies are being linked to the community plan, and the recent introduction of new arrangements will ensure better alignment.

55. The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 places a statutory duty on all Scottish councils to set up a community planning process within their area. Angus Council made an early start to community planning, setting up a local partnership and publishing a community plan well in advance of the legislation. Through the Angus Community Planning Partnership (ACPP), the area's overall needs and priorities are agreed with local partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors.
56. Following consultation, the Partnership produced its community plan in 2000. This sets out a ten-year direction for the area and provides an overarching framework within which the council sets its priorities and draws up its corporate plan. The community plan identifies five themes relating to strategic issues that the council can deliver only in partnership with other key players in the local area. The themes are shown in exhibit 3.

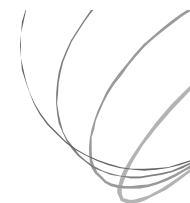
Exhibit 3

Key themes from the Angus community plan

The community plan for Angus identifies the following five key themes:

- The Economy – encourage the development of a prosperous and sustainable economy.
- Lifelong Learning – provide first class education and training opportunities for all.
- Healthy and Safe Communities – improve the health of the community, promote the development of primary health based provision and maintain a safe environment for all people in Angus.
- Caring Communities – improve the social well-being of the community and promote the development of preventative child care services.
- The Environment – secure an excellent quality of environment in towns, the countryside and coast.

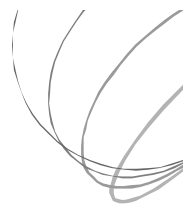
Source: Angus Community Plan



57. The key themes are supported by three underlying principles. Sustainable development seeks to ensure that the needs of the community are met in a sustainable manner; social inclusion aims to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to participate in community life; and active citizenship promotes involvement in the decision-making processes of public bodies. Strategies and action plans have been developed to progress each of these areas of work.
58. Like plans drawn up by other community planning partnerships, the Angus Community Plan reflects broad aspirations that would be shared by most communities. The Partnership has translated these aspirations into goals that affect people in specific ways, through the regular production of a Community Plan Progress Report and Review that identifies actions associated with the themes and principles. The latest Progress Report and Review highlights achievements from the previous year against each of the themes and local community planning areas.
59. Significant progress has recently been made through inclusion in the report of expected outcomes, targets, milestones, and timescales for the future, including details of which partners will contribute to achieving these. However, the way in which the actions will be measured could be made clearer. The achievements identified to date are more focused on processes or establishing infrastructure than on outcomes for individuals, but this reflects the initial stage of building an effective community planning infrastructure.
60. Considerable efforts have been made to establish baseline information and the Indicators Supplement which accompanies the Progress Report and Review 2003/04 provides a commendable amount of performance information at a local level, detailed by community planning theme. The development of performance indicators is a significant achievement for the Partnership. There is limited national data available at present on these issues, but it appears that Angus Community Planning Partnership is more advanced than most other CPPs in addressing the challenge of developing meaningful performance information.

The council's corporate plan

61. Angus Council is business-like, reflecting a culture in which probity and propriety are paramount, and traditional ways of doing things are valued. This is important, but the modern public management agenda demands more. Best Value requires councils not only to get better at doing what they currently do, but to respond to the changing needs of their communities.
62. The council's current corporate plan signals the beginning of a shift towards more customer focus. It states: 'We aim to deliver customer services that are modern and what people want'. The council's vision, set out in its corporate plan for 2003-07, clearly recognises that services should be driven by what users and local residents need (exhibit 4). The challenge for the council will be to ensure that



there is a cultural shift throughout the organisation to ensure messages from customers are not only heard but are acted upon.

63. The five key themes and underlying principles in the Angus Community Plan are reflected in the vision and priorities set out in the council's corporate plan. However, the corporate plan also contains a number of other commitments and it is unclear how these relate to the identified priorities. In general these commitments reflect internal business processes (such as customer care and corporate governance) or statutory responsibilities (such as community planning and best value).

Exhibit 4

Angus Council's vision is set out in its corporate plan.

We will focus our attention on, and be led by, our customers and residents. We will work to deliver effective and efficient services that are available to everyone.

We will promote the following:

- Active involvement in society
- Equal opportunities for everyone
- Developments that last
- A thriving economy
- Lifelong learning
- Healthy safe and caring communities
- Quality in our environment

Source: Angus Council, Corporate Plan 2003-2007

64. The corporate plan identifies a small number of actions related to the main priorities. Some of these actions are specific and measurable, but too many are imprecise or cannot easily be measured. The corporate plan consists of many aspirational statements rather than forming a clear blueprint for action (exhibit 5). It is important that these aspirational objectives are translated into specific actions/targets in service plans to deliver better services for users.
65. There is also a need to monitor results more effectively. While the council has produced its corporate plan in a leaflet format that is attractive, accessible, brief and easy to understand, it is the first document in a process that will include a more detailed working document for officers and members to use in measuring progress. At present, in the absence of a more detailed plan with SMART targets it is not possible to assess fully how well the council is meeting its stated objectives. This has obvious implications for internal scrutiny and public accountability.

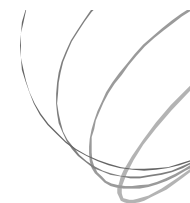


Exhibit 5

Angus Council's corporate plan contains too many actions that are difficult to measure, are too vague, or are about processes rather than outcomes.

- Help local businesses to succeed
- Carry out literacy work with young people
- Work to reduce domestic abuse
- Develop mental health services with the NHS
- Manage our ground in an environmentally-friendly way
- Develop an anti-bullying strategy

Source: Angus Council, Corporate Plan 2003-2007

Plans at service level

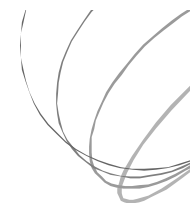
66. All departments produce service plans for the period covered by the corporate plan (2003-07). All departmental service plans contain a vision statement, a values framework or a set of key aims which provided a clear framework within which services will be delivered in the medium term. Service plans are generally linked to the corporate and community plan priorities at a strategic level, although the links could be made more explicit.
67. In general service plans contain outcome or output measures only if there are national targets and priorities or if the output is easy to count (such as the number of people using a service). The council is not alone in this; performance measures are generally underdeveloped in local government. The focus needs to shift from processes to the things that matter for service users and local residents.
68. The Education Department's service plan contains a statement of its overall aims and vision. The vision statement was developed in consultation with staff, pupils and parents. At the last inspection by HMIE and Audit Scotland, strong links were identified between the aims and vision of the Education Department and overall corporate objectives.

Vision, values and aims

“Performance in this area was very good. The council had a clear vision statement and a strong commitment to community planning. There were very good links between aims and values at corporate, Education Department and establishment levels.

The vision and values of the Education Service were clear, widely understood and accepted.”

Source: HMIE Inspection report 2002

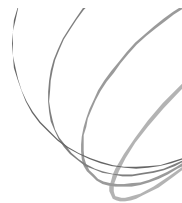


69. In contrast, the social work service plan for 2003-07 concentrates on a description of the social work value base, embedded in a page describing legal responsibilities and departmental structures. A clear statement of vision can provide clarity of purpose and make it easier to set clear objectives.
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“The Social Work value base includes a recognition of the uniqueness and dignity of individual members of society and their rights and responsibilities. The overarching themes are concerned with social justice and the maximising of opportunities for individuals to achieve their full potential.”

Source: Angus Council, Social Work Service Plan 2003/07

70. The absence of a clearly expressed vision for the social work service may be linked to the difficulties encountered by the department in producing clear summary performance information. This also makes it difficult to assess the overall performance of the department at a strategic level.
71. The targets in the social work service plan are currently overly focused on processes and initiatives and are not related to improvements in outcomes for service users. Many of the objectives involve developing plans, systems or revised documentation. Like the service plans for other departments, the plan reflects a commitment to delivering high quality services. However the planned actions and the expected results are not always clear.
72. There is a need to improve the specification of objectives and focus more on outcomes for service users. It is easier to set SMART targets for simple outputs, such as the number of new doors installed in council houses, than for complex services such as child protection. However, service plans need to focus more on the impact on service users, and include more measures that demonstrate whether services are getting better for them.
73. Best Value requires continuous improvement in performance. While service plans generally show a commitment to continuous improvement, the absence of targets makes it difficult to assess progress. The council needs to set itself more challenging targets, and to plan and review its services from the perspective of service users.
74. The council is aware that it needs to ensure that its various corporate and department plans are aligned with the Angus Community Plan to avoid duplication and potentially conflicting objectives. A mapping exercise has been carried out which is expected to identify all the various plans currently in place, and how they can relate to each other. The Angus CPP is sharing this analysis with the Scottish Executive to assist developments at a national level.
75. The council also recognises the need to get closer to its customers and shape services around what people need. It is important that this happens quickly as it will help the council to refocus its service



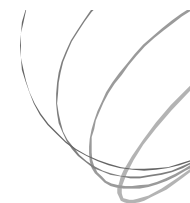
plans. It will also help in formulating measures and targets for performance management. This in turn can form the basis of public performance reporting that focuses on what people are interested in, rather than on processes or initiatives.

76. The council's own assessment recognises the need for more central control and corporate monitoring to support the often excellent central guidance on Best Value and other corporate initiatives such as the 'balanced scorecard' (discussed later in this report). The role of the corporate centre is to drive forward council priorities and encourage the adoption of minimum corporate standards.
77. Following the 2003 council elections, members led a corporate seminar to explore the strategic priorities that the council and its officers should pursue. This allowed the new administration to indicate its overall aims and objectives. Senior officers were involved in the process. The exercise resulted in a small number of key priorities for the internal management of the council. These are shown at exhibit 1.
78. Subsequently, the council agreed a report produced by the chief executive entitled Responding to Change, which set out a systematic response to the issues identified by elected members, including specific tasks for individual senior managers. It is still early days, but this process offers an important opportunity for the council to make real progress in areas where there is a definite need for improvement. If successful, it will provide evidence of commitment and leadership by both elected members and officers on key aspects of the way in which the council is run.

Equal opportunities

The council needs to make a greater commitment to equal opportunities at all levels of the organisation.

79. Angus Council has in place an Equal Opportunities Policy and a Race Equality Scheme. There is a Corporate Equal Opportunities Group whose remit is to draft equal opportunities policies. The group also acts as a sounding board for senior management, and seeks to raise awareness and promote good practice.
80. However, the council does not systematically measure its performance on equal opportunities, and as a result it cannot demonstrate that its policies and actions are delivering equal opportunities to citizens and service users. The council has started to monitor the representation of different racial groups in its workforce, as required by the Race Relations Amendment Act, but the information base is currently inadequate – only 40% of staff responded to a monitoring survey.

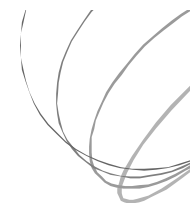


81. Our audit suggests that policies are implemented inconsistently across services. This, together with the lack of performance information, suggests that members and senior managers have not driven progress on equal opportunities. The Corporate Equal Opportunities Group, chaired by the personnel services manager, recognised in a paper to the Policy and Resources Committee (Feb 2001) that a strategic commitment needed to be made to report equalities issues to Committee on a regular basis. This has not yet happened.
82. In terms of gender equality, the statutory performance indicators show that only 6.4% of the workforce at chief officer level are women. This percentage has declined in recent years, and the council ranks 29th out of the 32 Scottish councils for this indicator. The percentage of senior professional staff who are female has also declined, although the council ranks ninth for this indicator. These indicators partly reflect the age profile of senior staff.
83. These indicators will take time to change but it is important that recruitment processes are open and inclusive, and take full account of equal opportunities issues. The council acknowledges that it needs to do better on equalities issues.

Sustainable development

The council demonstrates a clear commitment to sustainable development. Where improvement actions have been identified these are largely in areas where foundations are already in place.

84. Angus Council's business processes include arrangements to consider sustainable development. Sustainable development is included in the Angus Community Plan themes and in the vision and themes expressed in the council's corporate plan. It is considered as part of the service planning process and is evident in cross-service strategic plans – most notably the Environmental Strategy Action Plan and the Economic Development Strategy.
85. The council has approved a policy to support fair trade, and the energy management unit has developed policies, standards and operational procedures. A corporate Environment Strategy Group has been established.

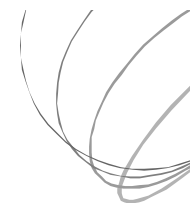


86. The council has demonstrated that sustainable development is a feature of service delivery in a number of areas:
- Angus Council is the first Scottish local authority to be awarded accreditation to the National Energy Efficiency Accreditation Scheme.
 - The council recycled the highest proportion of household, commercial and industrial waste in Scotland in 2002/03.
 - Programmes are in place to improve the energy efficiency of council houses, flood prevention and coastal protection.
 - The council operates internal sustainability schemes for computer and office equipment, paper and consumables.
87. In addition sustainable development has been identified as a key theme in the council's procurement strategy. The council's procedures for Best Value and other service reviews include a sustainability checklist.
88. The council has also made significant efforts to engage the community. The Brechin eco footprint project surveyed local people about their personal consumption and behaviour. This award-winning project is attracting international interest.

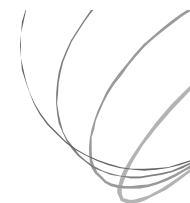
Facilitating the Community Planning process

Sound progress has been made in establishing many of the key building blocks of Community Planning. The council and its partners have acknowledged the need to move on from this initial stage and to demonstrate progress in meeting the wider targets and objectives identified for the community.

89. The council made a good start on Community Planning, well ahead of the statutory requirements. It has taken an inclusive and well-organised approach, with clear terms of reference for partners, a clear structure, and well defined roles and relationships with community councils, area forums and local community planning partnerships.
90. The Angus Community Planning Partnership (ACPP) includes NHS Tayside, Angus LHCC, Tayside Police, Tayside Fire Brigade, Scottish Enterprise Tayside, Communities Scotland, Angus Association of Voluntary Organisations, Angus Rural Partnership and Angus College. The council provides strong leadership, and the clear framework it has developed has resulted in high levels of commitment from its partners. The members of ACPP have identified increased mutual understanding and debate on common issues as the key achievements arising from the partnership.



91. Angus has a well developed, effective approach for engaging local communities in identifying the priorities for community planning. Local area partnerships have been set up for Brechin, Carnoustie, Montrose, Kirriemuir & the Glens, Monifieth and Arbroath, with plans to extend this network to cover all areas. Each local partnership is allocated a council director as champion and leader, responsible for making the linkages between local and area-wide community planning issues.
92. The first annual ACPP Conference was held in 2003 to raise awareness of Community Planning among community leaders and to develop the approach. A second conference is planned for 2004. In addition, local seminars have been held in Arbroath, Forfar and Kirriemuir, Monifieth, Brechin and Carnoustie as part of a rolling programme to develop the focus of each local area. Further seminars are planned for this year.
93. Following an early start, Angus has made good progress in establishing many of the key building blocks for effective community planning. The council and its partners have acknowledged the need to move on from this initial stage and to demonstrate progress in meeting the wider targets and objectives identified for the community.



Part 2: Is the council responding to local people?

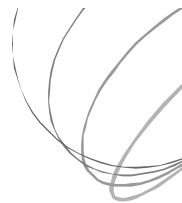
A council delivering Best Value should be able to demonstrate that it is responsive to the needs of its communities, citizens, customers, employees and other stakeholders so that plans, priorities and actions are informed by an understanding of those needs. It should have a continuing dialogue with other public sector partners and the local business, voluntary and community sectors. Its consultation arrangements should be open, fair and inclusive. The council should report to the public on its performance to enable people to make informed decisions about services and hold the council to account.

The audit focused on the mechanisms in place for obtaining the views of local people and for reporting back to them.

The council has a number of approaches to making its services more responsive to the needs of its local communities and involving people in planning for service improvements, including a Citizens' Panel. Some of these are at a fairly early stage and the council recognises the need to drive them forward to ensure that they are co-ordinated and fully effective. The council also needs to ensure that services respond fully to the feedback generated.

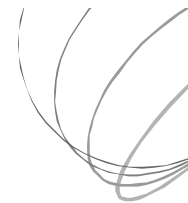
Consulting with people

94. The council has a number of different approaches to consulting with its communities. These include statutory consultation exercises, a citizens' panel and the use of local representative groups such as Community Councils and Local Community Planning Partnerships. Community Planning partners share in some of these activities. The council is developing a 'Model for Community Engagement', which sets out a framework for all services.
95. Members have stated that they want a clearer commitment to the delivery of customer/citizen-focused services and this is reflected in the corporate plan. A Customer Care Working Group has been set up to take this forward. Early in 2004, the Group identified priority areas for action and these are being progressed.
96. The annual service planning exercise includes a corporate overview to identify areas for consultation, and there are examples of services being shaped and improved in response to the results of consultation. Detailed guidance on consultation exercises is available to staff on the council's intranet, and advice is available from the Policy and Performance team. However, there is no corporate monitoring to ensure that guidance is followed. The lack of corporate coordination and monitoring



poses a risk that some 'difficult to reach' groups of the community are not consulted, or that relevant information is not shared across services and between partners.

97. The council has recognised the need to coordinate more effectively the feedback received from stakeholders and plans to address this through the Model for Community Engagement for all community planning partners.
98. The council's Citizens' Panel is coordinated at a corporate level. There are mechanisms for ensuring that the panel is representative and that feedback is given to all relevant services and partners and to panel members.
99. At a local level, the council has recently done much to encourage community engagement, including liaising with 26 Community Councils, supporting eight area forums, setting up local community planning partnerships and running local seminars. There are other mechanisms in place which can also help identify the concerns and priorities of citizens and local communities, such as the Youth Report and Action Plan, and the 50+ Action Plan.
100. Local communities may identify competing priorities, and the council and its community planning partners will have to determine how best to use limited resources to meet the needs of the Angus area as a whole.
101. Elected members recognise the value of complaints and concerns raised directly with them by members of the public in providing information about how well services are delivered. The council has a complaints system in place and this is advertised on its website and in council leaflets. Standards and response times for dealing with complaints are set out, but the council does not monitor performance. There are different systems in place for service-level complaints, and not all services have an explicit complaints management system. Not all services systematically report complaints to their Committees. This is a matter which the council is currently addressing.



Social work – a good listener

The Social Work and Health Department has well developed systems for consulting users and carers, but it needs to improve the way it tells people about the results of consultation.

Social work deals with some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in society. It is important that service users and their carers are properly consulted about the types of services needed.

The Council has undertaken several recent consultation exercises, particularly on service plans and strategies. It uses a variety of consultation methods including forums and conferences, for example an older people carers' conference. Older people and their carers are the largest client group for social work services. The Council's service planning group for older people includes representatives of relevant voluntary sector organisations such as Angus Community Care Forum, Age Concern Angus and Alzheimer Scotland Action on Dementia. The Council has also undertaken research with Age Concern Angus to examine older people's views about a range of services.

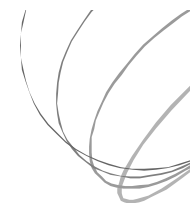
The Joint Community Care Plan for 2003-2006 recognises that *'more work is required to identify and sustain avenues for meaningful involvement of older people and their carers in the planning process'*. The Council also recognises that it should improve the way it tells respondents and service users about the outcome of its consultation exercises. This was confirmed by audit interviews with representatives of the voluntary sector, who were otherwise positive about the council's approach to consultation. Consultation with user groups is undertaken as part of the best value review process.

The department recognises the value of issues identified from complaints. These are discussed by management team meetings to ensure that lessons are applied across the various service areas.

Voluntary sector representatives interviewed as part of the audit indicated that the department was generally good at resolving complaints locally. 'Informal' complaints which are raised locally are now recorded in the same way as formal complaints and as the information becomes available performance on this will be reported through the Council's performance management system.

The Council demonstrates innovative and responsive services in some areas of its social work service. For example, recognising that there was poor take-up of meals and inequalities in provision between different localities, the Council has revamped its meals-on-wheels service to provide better quality meals with a more equitable service across the different communities within the Council's area. Following the introduction of the improved service, take-up increased from 99,000 to 240,000 meals a year.

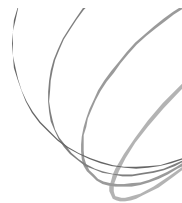
Source: Audit Scotland



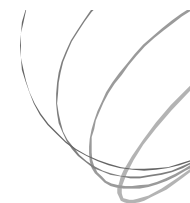
Reporting back to local people

There is significant scope for improvement in performance reporting. Progress is currently hampered by weaknesses in performance management systems, and the council needs to be more balanced in its public performance reporting. On a more positive note, information on the types of services available and what to expect from them is generally good and many leaflets are 'Crystal Marked' for plain English.

102. It is important that councils report to the public on the quality of the services they deliver in order to demonstrate that they are achieving best value. Statutory guidance indicates that councils should publish information on the services they provide, the standards of service people can expect and how the council has performed in meeting those standards. Information should also be published on the ways in which value for money is being pursued in providing services.
103. In common with most councils, Angus views its Annual Report and Accounts as a key document for public performance reporting. The annual report includes details of the themes in the council's corporate plan and gives examples of the main achievements in terms of each of the themes. There is also a section on service performance which lists aims, ambitions and achievements for each service. The annual report is interesting and informative but, as appears to be the case in many councils, there is limited information reported publicly about areas for improvement. In future, the council's Performance Indicators Supplement is expected to present a more balanced picture of the council's performance.
104. The council publishes the Statutory Performance Indicators as a supplement to the annual report. Performance trends are shown over three years for each of the indicators. Comparisons with the three neighbouring authorities of Dundee, Perth & Kinross and Aberdeenshire, as well as average figures for Scotland, provide useful contextual information. In addition to the statutory PIs, the main achievements of each department are highlighted. However, this report also concentrates overwhelmingly on positive aspects of the service. This goes beyond what some councils produce, but the publication could be developed to include more narrative explaining the significance of what is being measured, and highlighting key features of the council's performance. This would be particularly useful for people not used to interpreting data and could encourage the public to engage with the council.
105. The Angus Community Planning Partnership has produced an Indicator Supplement to the Progress Report and Review setting out performance against a range of high level indicators at both the Angus-wide and local geographic area level.



106. The council publishes committee reports and minutes on its web-site, but appendices are not included routinely. These documents often contain the main information on service performance, so that public accountability would be improved by publishing them on the web-site.
107. In March 2000 the council published a Strategy Framework and Action Plan for public performance reporting. This stated: 'The publication of Statutory Performance Indicator Information will remain central to the Public Performance Reporting Strategy. However, it is hoped to extend the level and type of performance information available in order that we can not only account for our performance but also become more transparent in our service performance.' Progress in meeting these aspirations is limited.
108. The council's ability to produce comprehensive performance information on services is seriously hampered by the lack of good performance management information, discussed elsewhere in this report. The council recognises the need to revise its strategy for public performance reporting in the light of the Local Government Scotland Act 2003.
109. The council does better in providing clear information about the range of services available and what to expect from them. The Social Work and Health Department has revised all its leaflets for service users and they are now 'Crystal Marked' for plain English. The Housing Department is also a member of the Plain English Campaign. The council currently has a Gold Award from the Plain English Campaign (meaning at least 50 leaflets have been produced in Plain English). It plans to take out corporate membership, showing its commitment to the publication of information that is easily understood.
110. Further statutory guidance on public performance reporting is expected to be issued soon by the Scottish Executive and it will be important for the council to review its arrangements in light of this and put in place a SMART action plan to develop an approach that is consistent with the standards contained in the guidance.



Part 3: Can the council deliver Best Value?

In order to ensure that they can achieve continuous improvement in delivering services, councils must have proper systems and processes in place and these must be effectively managed.

The audit focused on managing resources, managing performance, fundamental review and joint working.

Managing resources

Planning and budgeting

The council operates sound arrangements for planning and budgeting, which safeguard public funds and support the authority's objectives. The council needs to introduce a more effective policy-led approach for both capital and revenue budgets to ensure resources are properly matched to corporate priorities.

The council's scrutiny of performance against the agreed priorities in annual service plans needs to improve.

111. Ministerial guidance requires councils to have a framework for planning and budgeting that includes detailed and realistic plans to achieve objectives stated in corporate and service plans. There should be clear links between plans and financial and other resources.

112. Until very recently, the approach taken by the council in setting its budget involved service departments identifying annual efficiency savings against a common target (eg 1%) across the council. This was designed to allow members to make decisions as to which savings were acceptable in order to release funds to apply to areas of budget pressure, new developments or performance improvement. In isolation, this approach has three important limitations:

- It does not allow elected members to consider a full range of options so that they can make meaningful decisions on budgets.
- It does not support a policy-led approach to budgeting.
- A percentage reduction across all services may not be sufficient to make the necessary changes.

113. There are however features of the budget process in Angus that allow some linkage to policy priorities. These include full GAE uplift for education and social work services; consideration of specific service developments by members; and the application of additional external resources – such as Quality of Life funding – to policy priority areas.



114. However, elected members have indicated their wish for a more policy-led system, and senior management has recognised the need to improve processes and procedures. The 2004/05 budget process kicked off a more policy-driven approach that involved a review of the four year corporate and service plans for consistency and deliverability. The Budget Strategy Group has agreed that additional improvements should be made for the 2005/06 budget round.
115. The council produces a corporate plan on a multi-year cycle with links to the budget planning cycle. The corporate plan outlines the council's key strategic priorities and sets the framework within which annual departmental service plans and annual budgets are produced. However, the links between the corporate plan and annual service plans for departments are not always clear. In addition, while departments are required to identify additional burdens arising from their plans, initiatives outlined in annual Service Plans were not always costed through the budget process.
116. Corporate priorities may alter over a relatively short timescale to reflect new information or changes in government policy. However, some of the council's stated budget strategy priorities (to protect the budgets of police and fire, education, social work and roads departments) were not clearly identified in the corporate plan. Further integration of policy and budget planning will allow annual service plans and budgets to match corporate priorities and objectives more closely.
117. As with revenue budgets, the links between corporate priorities and the capital plan are not always clear. An annual capital plan is produced, based on a capital appraisal process, and an officer-led group determines which capital projects will be put forward for funding. Members are involved in the capital budget decision-making process and they also approve the Prudential Indicators arising from the proposed capital programme. The Director of Finance is currently undertaking a review of the process for capital project appraisal, budget setting and monitoring arrangements.
118. The council has had a culture of fiscal prudence since its inception and regards budgetary control as a key priority. This approach safeguards public funds, but it may not always result in an optimal use of resources. The council has significantly underspent against both revenue and capital budgets over recent years (exhibit 6), and the council's external auditor has expressed concerns about consistent underspends in his annual report to Members of the council and the Controller of Audit.

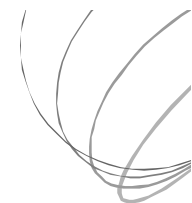


Exhibit 6

Angus Council has a record of significant budget underspends.

Financial Year	Capital Budget Underspend £million	Revenue Budget Underspend £million
2000/2001	3.3 (16.3%)	3.5 (2.6%)
2001/2002	1.4 (8.8%)	3.0 (2.1%)
2002/2003	1.7 (7.0%)	3.7 (2.3%)

Source: Audit Scotland

119. The council attributes underspends to a variety of factors such as the allocation of Scottish Executive additional resources late in the financial year; major policy initiatives taking time to bed in; and delays in capital spend projects outwith the council's control such as in the case of the Montrose Bridge project. The council is aware of the need to limit underspending on budgets as far as possible.

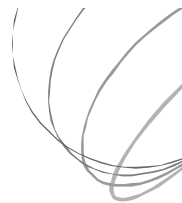
Human resources

120. The council employs around 5,000 staff at a cost of £100 million a year. This represents 40% of its gross expenditure. As with any organisation delivering services, staff are a key resource and must be managed well.

121. With a view to minimising disruption following local government reorganisation in 1996, the council adopted many of the existing management structures that had existed in the previous authorities. It has recently identified and agreed a model management structure that offers significant potential for efficiencies and a more dynamic system of management that can respond more effectively to the requirements of elected members.

122. The council has identified benefits that it wishes to achieve from the proposed restructuring. However, there are no firm plans in place for moving to this new structure, and an ad hoc approach has been adopted taking opportunities as they arise. This may be less disruptive, but it will take much longer to achieve the benefits and will be more difficult to plan and manage.

123. The council recognises the value of staff appraisals to ensure that people are properly managed and are in a position to deliver corporate and service priorities. Commendable efforts have been made by the council and a staff appraisal system has been established for many years. Manual staff have still



to be included; the current Human Resources strategy contains plans to develop a scheme for manual staff with a target timescale of March 2006.

124. The council's appraisal system follows generally recognised principles of good practice. Targets are agreed, based on both departmental objectives and individual development needs. Performance against the previous year's targets are discussed and assessed. Appraisal interviews are confidential but a written record is kept of the discussion and of the agreed action plan. The operation of the appraisal system is monitored centrally within the council.

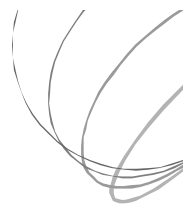
125. To be fully effective, staff appraisals should be linked to targets in service plans and the achievement of corporate objectives and work is underway in services to make these links more explicit. In some cases appraisals are not fully linked into training plans as the system intends.

126. The Investors in People (IIP) award is generally viewed as a robust indicator of sound staff management. It is a national accreditation scheme, covering a wide range of personnel practices such as staff appraisal and development, and communication. As a result of the council's commitment to HR issues, eight out of the twelve departments in the council, including the three largest, have achieved this award and the others are on target to achieve IIP status by 2005. The achievement of IIP accreditation by each department should also provide assurance that the staff appraisal system is operating to expected standards.

127. The council has established a systematic approach to monitoring the views of its staff through the use of staff surveys covering all of its departments. These are carried out every three or four years in order to monitor trends, with the first survey held in 1998 and a second in 2002. Although response rates were limited to 55% and 40% respectively, the results indicate that staff see the council as a good employer and feel that their skills and knowledge are used effectively. Generally, the results also show an improvement between 1998 and 2002. Amongst the positive indicators arising from the last survey were:

- 77% agree that Angus Council is a good employer
- 96% understand their roles and responsibilities
- 91% know what work standards are expected of them
- 79% know how well they are meeting their work standards
- 69% believe the council is seeking continuous improvement
- 61% say they are encouraged to contribute to improvements at work.

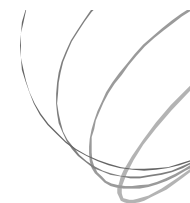
128. The results of the surveys are communicated to staff. Crucially, they are also used to identify issues that need to be addressed and to develop an action plan. For example, the 2002 survey has led to



each department reviewing its arrangements for internal communications and providing feedback to staff on their performance.

Fixed assets

129. The council has fixed assets valued at around £385 million. Property and asset management is already well developed in respect of schools, and the council recognises that a more corporate approach needs to be extended across the council to ensure that assets are managed in the most effective way possible, and are explicitly matched to the council's policy objectives. A corporate asset management strategy is being developed to address these issues
130. The council has recognised office accommodation as a major issue of concern and has identified this as one of its top ten risks in its Corporate Risk Register. There is a range of problems associated with administrative buildings. For example, there is a general shortage of office accommodation and some buildings do not support effective service delivery. The recent paper by the Chief Executive on 'Responding to Change' recognises the importance of accommodation in changing the way staff and the public view the council.
131. *"Poor council accommodation is a de-motivator of staff and creates a poor impression with the public who visit our premises...By tackling this issue swiftly and resolutely, the council would be giving a very clear message both about valuing staff and about the public having a pride in the premises in Angus where public services are provided."*
132. Subsequent to the completion of audit work, the council has agreed to develop a site at Orchardbank Industrial Estate for consolidated office accommodation. A traditional procurement route is currently favoured with a projected cost of £6 million identified for the development.



Managing performance

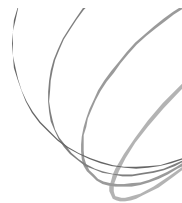
The council has had many of the building blocks for performance management in place for some time. A concerted effort has been made to install an effective corporate system based on the balanced scorecard. However, this is not fully developed and there is variation across individual departments. Weaknesses in the current performance management system are hampering effective scrutiny of performance by elected members and senior managers.

133. Good performance management systems are essential to ensure that the council's goals are achieved in an economic, efficient and effective way, and for proper scrutiny of service performance by elected members and senior officers.
134. To meet the statutory duty of continuous improvement, the council must have a firm grasp on how each of its services is performing. It should be able to demonstrate how current performance levels relate to previous results, and there should be targets to ensure better performance in the future. Performance management systems need to ensure that significant issues are identified, monitored and addressed.
135. Angus Council recognises that managing and measuring performance is critical to its success and has attempted to develop a performance management framework that translates corporate and departmental priorities into individual actions.
136. The performance management framework consists of a number of elements. The corporate plan sets the objectives by defining the council's strategic focus. All council services are expected to contribute to the achievement of the plan's objectives through departmental service plans.
137. In 1999 the council adopted the balanced scorecard as one of the building blocks of its developing performance management system. This is a tool where the key indicators for business success are set in four areas and regularly monitored to ensure that the key aspects of performance are considered by the organisation. The four areas are: customer perspective, internal processes, continuous improvement and finance. The council encountered significant difficulties in developing the approach, resulting in delays in implementing the system across the organisation.
138. The council considers Social Work and Health as an example of a department where the scorecard is well developed and operating effectively. However, while good efforts have been made by the department, it acknowledges that development is still required to make the scorecard fully effective. In particular the department needs to develop better targets and quality measures. In common with other services, the financial aspects of the scorecard also need to be developed to include information that will enable costs to be better monitored and managed. The information should assist in the



assessment of whether 'value for money' is being delivered. The current information on performance against budget is insufficient for this purpose.

139. The council acknowledges that the level of development and use of the scorecard varies between departments. Indeed the system is not effectively embedded in some departments with previous systems still being operated in parallel. The financial dimensions of the scorecard require significant development as a matter of priority if costs are to be properly managed and judgements made about whether services are being delivered economically.
140. The balanced scorecard was intended to be a management tool for monitoring key business activities. A number of departments use the balanced scorecard to report on performance to committee, but this is not done on a consistent basis across the council. The deficiencies in the scope of the current scorecard mean that it does not provide elected members with sufficient comprehensive information to enable them to draw meaningful conclusions about service performance. The council anticipate that the developing corporate management system will provide elected members with appropriate information in order that they can more appropriately monitor performance in the future.
141. Currently the main source of information for members is six-monthly update reports on service plans. These reports tend to list achievements without highlighting areas where targets have slipped or are unlikely to be met. There is a general need for members to be presented with more balanced accounts of service performance. Consideration should be given to a modified form of exception reporting that highlights major issues that need to be addressed, together with significant achievements. Proper development of the balanced scorecard could provide an appropriate mechanism for this.
142. Once effective and systematic reporting on performance is in place, it will be important for elected members to properly fulfil their role with regard to scrutinising performance and holding senior management to account on service delivery issues. Forthcoming guidance from CoSLA and the Best Value Task Force will assist in this process.
143. The Chief Officers Management Team has recently discussed the possibility of introducing a new performance management framework across the council that would address areas in which the sole use of the balanced scorecard would not be effective. The balanced scorecard has the potential to make an effective contribution to the corporate and service performance management system. The decision to adopt it is grounded in sound thinking and much time and effort has been invested in developing the process to this stage. Ownership, implementation and deployment issues will be important in carrying this work forward.
144. In reviewing its corporate framework, the council should explore the ways in which the balanced scorecard might be improved and expanded to address identified gaps. This would capitalise on the



time already invested in developing the scorecard and recognise that significant progress has been made in some departments. The links between corporate policy objectives and service department scorecards need to be improved. The financial aspects of the scorecard need to be developed if the scorecard is to become a fully effective management tool.

145. In reviewing its management arrangements, the council also needs to shift its current focus on internal processes to a greater focus on outcomes as experienced by service users. The Responding to Change initiative, with its concern with responsiveness to customers, could be a useful vehicle for this shift.
146. To assess the performance of a service, it is necessary to know how it compares with other providers. This allows more effective judgements to be made about the potential improvement that elected members might expect. Various benchmarking activities take place across the council, including membership of a benchmarking group with other local authorities, but it is not clear how this has affected service development or improvement.
147. Producing baseline performance reports for all services to the end of 2003/04 would help the council to identify how it is currently performing. A set of SMART targets for improvement could then be established for priority areas. These should represent either the things that most need to be improved, or the things that matter most to customers. This would then act as a driver for improved service delivery across the council in the coming months.

Review and option appraisal

Angus has good procedures in place to undertake best value service reviews. However, the council's approach to option appraisal has been limited by a reluctance to consider all options fully. The council acknowledges this and is reviewing its option appraisal guidelines.

148. To ensure that they achieve continuous improvement in services councils need to review significant areas of activity. Performance management systems should assist in identifying areas where costs are high, inefficiencies exist or the expected outcomes are not being achieved. A rolling programme of service reviews will ensure that all areas of activity are reviewed over a set timescale.
149. Angus initiated an initial five-year programme of best value service reviews covering the full range of its services. This programme is now almost complete and each year services are required to identify areas for review within their service plans. This means that best value reviews are linked into the normal planning cycle.



150. The council acknowledges that it needs to develop a systematic approach to the identification of fundamental areas for review now that the initial five year cycle is ending. It is also important that areas previously reviewed are revisited within a reasonable timescale.
151. Most departments have reviewed a broad range of services in some detail. In contrast, the approach to best value reviews in former CCT activities was less well developed. However, the council has resolved that as part of its broader BV Review programme, reviews for all former CCT activities will be undertaken to inform the 2005/06 budget setting process.
152. A comprehensive set of guidelines for reviewing services has been drawn up by the council. This promotes consistency. The review guidelines have been updated in response to experience. The methodology is based around the four principles of challenge, compare, consult, and compete. For major reviews to be effective they must include an option appraisal which considers the full range of service delivery options. To date there has been limited consideration of alternative means of service delivery; reviews have tended to concentrate on improving direct provision of services, rather than considering alternative methods of service delivery (exhibit 7).
153. The council has undertaken to review its option appraisal guidance to ensure that full consideration is given to all options for service delivery. In order that members can make political choices about service delivery in an open, transparent and accountable manner, all options should be presented to them.

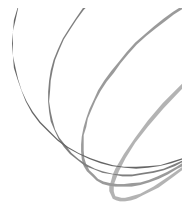


Exhibit 7

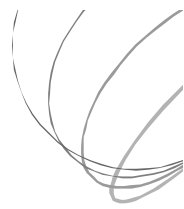
Best Value reviews

A small sample of best value service reviews was examined and the audit team found that they had been conducted in a thorough and comprehensive manner. Option appraisal was limited in some cases, reflecting the council's approach at the time the reviews were conducted.

The limited approach to option appraisal is perhaps best illustrated by the council's decision to restructure Leisure Services. The council decided to abolish its Contract Services department which had been set up in response to CCT. It was reasoned that the client/contractor split introduced by CCT had created inefficiencies. A limited review of options was undertaken, but the report to committee makes clear that the premise of a directly employed workforce was to inform the review. Thus the options available under the review were limited from the outset. No targets or measures were set up to demonstrate that the predicted efficiencies from the restructuring had been achieved.

There is some evidence that when presented with the full facts council members are prepared to take difficult decisions. Following a review of residential care services for older people the council decided to close two of its homes. The decision was based on cost and quality data, some of which was produced by the Accounts Commission as part of a national study of older people's residential care. The study highlighted that two of the council's homes were considerably more expensive than homes run by other local authorities, without any evidence that the quality of the provision was any better. Faced with this evidence, council members made the difficult decision to close the homes.

Source: Audit Scotland



Joint working

The council does well on joint working and has established outcome measures within the Community Plan Progress Report and Review. There is a need, however, for the development of performance management arrangements to measure the success of joint working.

154. In the course of the audit it was apparent that all services within the council are committed to the benefits of joint working. In particular there are well developed arrangements for joint working between the Social Work and Health Department and NHS Tayside. The department is working with its partners to ensure that appropriate performance measures are developed to measure the effectiveness of joint working arrangements. NHS Tayside has agreed to adopt the council's balanced scorecard approach to measure performance on Joint Future work.
155. The council acknowledges that, although it has made good progress in establishing and managing joint working arrangements, the real outcomes – in terms of benefits to communities – will be measurable only in the medium to long term. The council, in common with others, faces a challenge in ensuring that outcome measures are established to assess these joint initiatives.

Public private partnerships

156. After an extensive consultation exercise the council has committed to a £50 million public private partnership (PPP) to provide new/refurbished schools in Forfar and Carnoustie. It is engaged in a PPP project to upgrade the A92 at estimated capital value of £54 million.
157. PPP is also being used to deliver on proposals for Community Resource Centres which are innovative joint projects with NHS Tayside to provide social and health care. Contracts have been let for the first of these Community Resource Centres which will serve Forfar and Kirriemuir. The procurement of PPP projects will be kept under review by the external auditor.



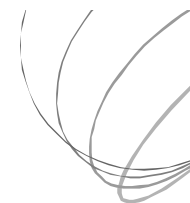
Exhibit 8

Forfar and Kirriemuir Community Resource Centre

Forfar and Kirriemuir Community Resource Centre is a joint project by Angus Council and NHS Tayside aiming to provide integrated community health and social work services to the people of Forfar, Kirriemuir and the surrounding area. It involves the building of a new integrated facility on the site of an existing hospital which will replace both that facility and Forfar Infirmary and the refurbishment and re-configuration of Beech Hill House to provide residential and day care facilities for older people and people with dementia. The Forfar and Kirriemuir CRC will bring together health and social care services including:

- A day hospital for people with mental health problems
- Community Mental Health Teams
- Day services for people with physical disabilities
- Residential care for older people and people with dementia
- Day care for older people and people with dementia
- Respite care for older people
- General Practitioners' services
- GP inpatient ward
- Child health services
- Physiotherapy, chiropody and speech and language therapy
- Continuing Care for frail older people
- Continuing Care for people with dementia
- Palliative care

Source: Commissioning community care services for older people, Audit Scotland, 2004



Part 4: How do services perform?

This section is concerned with performance in individual services. The fundamental aim of Best Value is to improve public services and respond to the needs of their users.

The audit focused on services that have a direct impact on the public. The audit approach involved an in-depth examination of some service areas and a limited overview in others. Due to the limitations of the performance management system at Angus, in many instances it has been difficult to assess how well services are performing overall.

Education

There is sound evidence to show that the council is providing a good education service. Sustained improvement has taken place since the initial inspection of education services in 2002.

158. Education is the largest service provided by local authorities. Nationally it accounts for 39% of local authority expenditure on services. In Angus the education service accounts for 41% of the council's expenditure and in 2002/03 the department spent £68 million. The department employs around 2,300 staff, just under half of the council's workforce.

159. Education services are inspected regularly by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE). Audit Scotland works with HMIE on each inspection and reliance has been placed on this work in forming a view of the service. HMIE reported on the education service in Angus in April 2002. The findings of the inspection, based on 11 quality indicators determined by HMIE, were very positive (exhibit 9).

160. A follow-up inspection has recently been completed and confirms that the council is making good or very good progress in areas identified for action. A copy of the inspection reports can be found on the HMIE website: www.hmie.gov.uk.

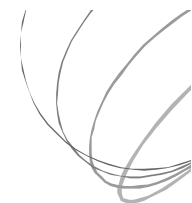


Exhibit 9

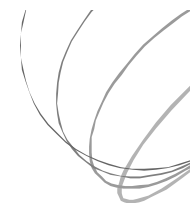
HMIE assessments

	Very good	Good	Fair	Unsatisfactory
Visions, values & aims	✓			
Effectiveness of leadership & management	✓			
Policy development		✓		
Mechanisms for consultation	✓			
Mechanisms for communication		✓		
Service planning	✓			
Deployment & effectiveness of central staff		✓		
Resource management		✓		
Financial management	✓			
Measuring, monitoring and evaluating performance		✓		
Continuous improvement in performance		✓		

Source: *Inspection of the Education Functions of Angus Council, HMIE/Accounts Commission, 2002*

Pupil attainment

161. There is a steady increase in the percentage of primary pupils achieving or exceeding expected levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. Performance in reading and mathematics was above the national average, while writing was in line with the national average. In all three areas the rate of improvement was faster than the national rate.
162. In secondary schools, the attainment of second year pupils in reading continued to be slightly above the national average, while attainment in writing was well above the national average. The performance in mathematics remained above average.
163. There was overall improvement in attainment in national qualifications, but not at all levels. The rate of improvement at S4 over a five-year period was above the national average. In contrast, there were no clear trends in results at S5 and S6 and on most measures the rate of change was below the national average. HMIE noted that the department was well placed to sustain and improve on these current levels of attainment.



Class sizes and school occupancy

164. Although the number of primary school classes with more than thirty pupils has been steadily increasing in recent years, it is still below the national average. A small proportion of classes for Primary 1 to Primary 3 exceeded the thirty pupil target.

165. The percentage of primary schools that are significantly under or over-occupied has been reduced over the last three years. The council undertakes regular reviews of occupancy levels in schools and assesses the viability of schools with low roll numbers. A recent review resulted in the proposed closure of a primary school. In 2002/03 one primary school had an occupancy rate above 100%, while four had occupancy rates below 40%. These percentages and trends compare favourably with the national figures. For secondary schools only one school is marginally over-occupied.

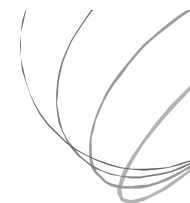
166. The asset management plans in place for each school, together with the further development of the schools estate strategy, should assist the council to maintain appropriate occupancy rates within schools.

Special educational needs

167. The council performs well in relation to the time taken to complete assessments of special educational needs. This dropped from 18 weeks in 2000/01 to 13 weeks in 2002/03. Over the same period national figures have decreased from 28 to 25 weeks. None of the thirty-nine assessments undertaken in 2002/03 took longer than 40 weeks to complete. Nationally 17.6% of assessments took more than 40 weeks.

Pre-school education

168. The council's pre-school education service is broadly in line with national averages. 3.9% of four-year-olds received fewer than five educational sessions per week compared with a national average of 4.3%. In the same year, the percentage of pre-school four-year-olds receiving grant-aided education was 99.8%, in line with the national average. However, 27% of three-year-olds received fewer than five educational sessions a week in 2002/03, compared with the national average of 17.4%.



Social work and health

The council has received generally favourable reports from the Social Work Services Inspectorate and from the inspection of its joint working arrangements with the NHS.

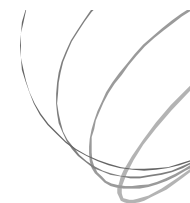
In common with other councils Angus needs to consider whether it has struck the right balance between care at home and care in institutional settings. It is working to establish whether the current balance is right by consulting services users and other interested groups.

Action is in hand to address recent deterioration in performance measures published by the Accounts Commission. There are early indications that this is beginning to have a positive effect.

The audit focused mainly on community care for older people as this represents a major area of expenditure and contributes significantly to the quality of older people's lives.

169. Social Work provides a wide range of services to a diverse and vulnerable client group. The council has a traditional structure with a 'stand alone' Social Work department headed by the Director of Social Work and Health. The current director has been in post since September 2003.
170. The department's budget for 2003/04 was £39 million, with older people's services the largest single area of expenditure. The council has a mixed economy in the provision of social work services and, in 2003/04, around half of social work expenditure went in payments to external organisations for the provision of services.
171. The council has a significantly higher than average percentage of its population aged 65 and over, and the older population is predicted to increase in future years. £10 million was spent on residential care in 2003/04, while expenditure on community care services for older people was £7 million. The council owns and manages four residential homes for older people (104 beds) with the largest part of its residential care places being provided by the private sector (17 homes – 335 beds). There are also two voluntary sector homes (70 beds) providing places to council clients. The council commissions 87% of day care services from the voluntary sector. In contrast, the council provides most of its home care services through directly employed staff.
172. The Social Work Services Inspectorate annual report for 2003 includes a short review of services in Angus Council. The report indicates that Angus has generally made good progress with its community care services and comments favourably on its children and families services. The SWSI findings on children and families services are reinforced by the findings of the Audit Scotland study on youth justice¹, which showed the council to perform well on most aspects of the service.
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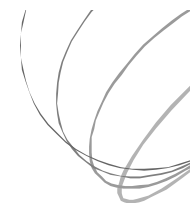
¹ *Dealing with offending by young people: A follow up report*, Audit Scotland 2003



173. Among a number of other issues, the SWSI report highlights the need to increase the number of older people who receive home care packages of more than 20 hours each week. This is discussed further below.
174. The SWSI report also identifies a large increase in the number of children on the child protection register, although the council does not consider that its approach to risk has changed. It has done some work to identify the reasons for the increase and has found a greater awareness of drugs related issues to be a contributory factor.
175. New arrangements for the inspection of children's services are being put in place by the Scottish Executive. This will involve the inspection of children's services over the next three years and is part of the Scottish Executive's programme to reform child protection services.
176. The department demonstrates good practice in consulting with and responding to the needs of services users and other stakeholders. This is illustrated in the example on page 28.

Joint Future

177. The Community Care and Health (Scotland) Act 2002 requires councils and health bodies to work together to deliver better services to community care clients. councils' arrangements for joint working are assessed under the Joint Performance Information and Assessment Framework (JPIAF). The 2002/03 assessment for Angus was largely favourable, highlighting many areas of good practice highlighted. The council has a Local Partnership Agreement with NHS Tayside for the provision of community care services and there is a Joint Community Care Plan in place.
178. Joint working between councils and the NHS has advantages for service users. It also means that public money is used to the best advantage. For example, keeping people in hospital for longer than necessary is bad for individuals and expensive for the NHS. The council has performed well in working with the NHS to reduce the number of people kept in hospital after they are well enough to be discharged to a more appropriate form of care. A part of its strategy is to examine and address the balance of care, and it has volunteered to take part in a forthcoming Audit Scotland study in this area.
179. Overall the department's arrangements for joint working are well developed. The children's services plan and the joint community care plan were drawn up in partnership with NHS Tayside and representatives of voluntary sector organisations. The council's innovative approach to joint community resource centres with NHS Tayside is highlighted as an example of good practice (exhibit 8).



180. The department has made good efforts in developing the balanced scorecard and has gone further than many social work departments in developing its performance management systems. It is aware that further development of the scorecard is needed to incorporate targets, quality and financial measures.

Performance indicators

181. The Accounts Commission publishes council profiles with 13 performance measures for Social Work. These measures are drawn from the Commission's Statutory Performance Indicators and are selected in consultation with practitioners as good measures of performance. In 2002/03 the council's performance on eight of the measures was worse than in 2001/02. In three of the measures, performance was worse by more than 15%. The department has introduced a system of 'hotspot' monitoring to ensure that action taken to address declining performance is effective. Early indications are that this is beginning to have a positive impact on performance.

182. Of the eight weaker areas, those relating to community care for older people are discussed further below. The remaining measures where performance deteriorated are shown in exhibit 10.

183. Despite declining performance in terms of qualified staff in adult residential care (which is discussed further below), the council performs well on the percentage of qualified staff in residential homes for children. Maintaining this at 70% for the last three years, Angus ranks sixth out of the 32 councils on this measure. The council also performs well in maintaining children in community placements, with 91.7% of looked after children placed in the community against the national average of 86.3%.

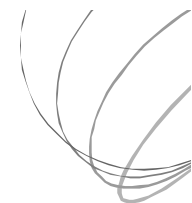


Exhibit 10

The council's performance is deteriorating on a number of social work performance measures

The council has steps in place to address these areas.

Definition of measure	2001/02	2002/03	Change	Rank out of 32 councils
Percentage of staff in residential homes for older people who are qualified	38	32	-16%	23
Percentage of staff in residential homes for other adults who are qualified	50	38	-24%	19
Proportion of social enquiry reports submitted to the courts by the due date	99	96.2	-3%	23
Proportion of new probationers seen by a supervising officer within one week	74.1	66	-11%	21
The average hours per week taken to complete community service orders	2.8	2.5	-10%	27

Source: Accounts Commission, council Profiles 2002/03

184. The council also shows improving performance in the proportion of social enquiry reports that were allocated to staff within two working days of receipt from the courts. In 2002/03 98.3% of reports met the target as against the Scottish average of 84.6%. The proportion of people who were reported to the courts for breach of probation increased slightly on the previous year, although performance on this measure is likely to be influenced by factors outwith the council's control.



The balance of care

185. There is widespread recognition that older people generally fare better when cared for in their own homes. Performance measures suggest the council may need to do more in shifting the balance of care (exhibit 11). This is reinforced by figures for expenditure on institutional care (exhibit 12).

Exhibit 11

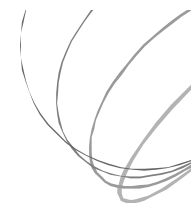
Performance measures relating to the provision of home care show a worsening trend, although there is some improvement in the provision of care at weekends.

Definition of Measure (rate per 1,000 population aged 65+)	2001/02	2002/03	Change	Rank out of 32 councils
Total home care hours	326.6	298.6	- 8%	32
No. of homecare clients receiving personal care	55.7	46.2	- 17%	15
No. of home care clients receiving care in evening/overnight	18.4	16.4	-11%	13
Number of home care clients receiving care at weekends	25.9	28.0	+ 8%	21

Source: Accounts Commission, Council Profiles 2002/03

186. It should be noted that the performance measures for home care are affected by a number of factors.

These include the pattern of need and demand in the area (which is influenced by the age structure of the elderly population), the levels of poverty and ill-health, and household composition. The Director of Social Work and Health believes that the figures have to be considered in the context of local wants and needs. The director indicated that the department has no feedback suggesting that people who require significant input from home care services are not receiving it and there is no evidence of unmet need in this area. However, an external audit report produced as part of Audit Scotland's national study on commissioning older people's services identified problems in recording unmet need.

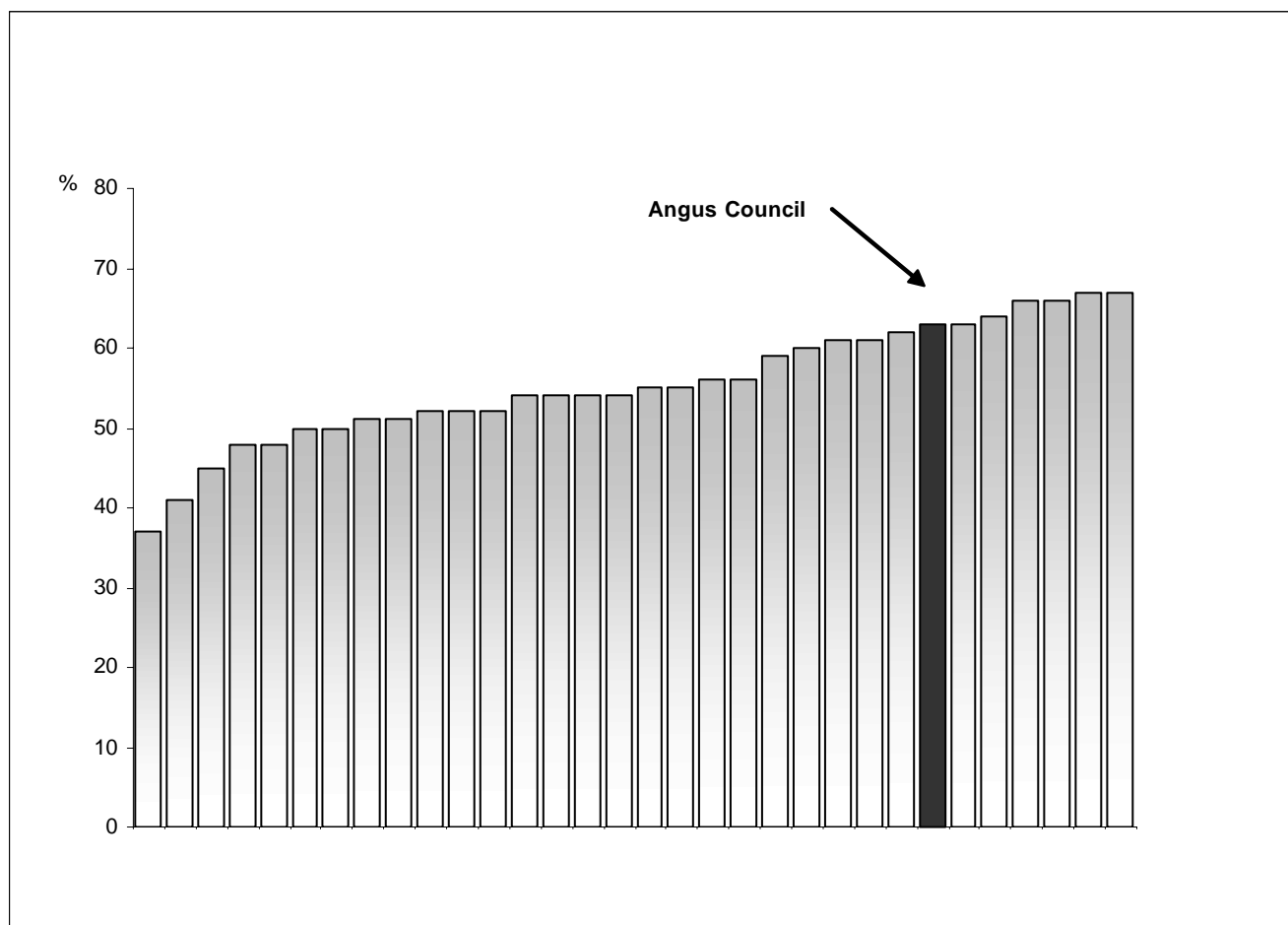


187. The council is currently in the process of implementing a new management information system which should provide more robust information on unmet need to assist in the planning and design of services. The Joint Community Care Plan for 2003-2006 also recognises the 'need to develop more robust systems to accurately identify and record unmet need on which to base the planning and development of services for older people'.

Exhibit 12

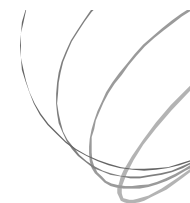
Expenditure on institutional forms of care

The council, in common with others, needs to consider whether it has the right balance between care at home and in institutional settings.



Source: Scottish Executive LRF3 returns; Audit Scotland

188. The council acknowledges that there are some issues relating to when, where and how care is provided. Declining performance figures for home care provided in the evening and overnight confirms this. While performance on providing care at weekends is improving slowly, the council is ranked 21 out of 32 councils for this measure. The council acknowledges that the increasing number of people with disabilities who are requesting direct payments (enabling them to purchase their own services directly from alternative providers) is further evidence that council services should be more flexible.



189. In 2001/02 the council undertook a major restructuring of its home care service following a best value review. The full impact of this restructuring in terms of improved flexibility and responsiveness will begin to be reflected in future years' performance figures. This is an area which the council is keeping under review.

190. The council has established a short term task group to examine the balance of care and the flexibility of services provided. This involves partner agencies and will take users' views into account. The findings from the task group will feed into the review of the council's partnership agreement with NHS and the Joint Community Care Plan.

Recruitment and retention

191. In common with other councils, Angus has problems in recruiting and retaining qualified social workers. In response to this the department has looked at ways to improve recruitment. For example, representatives from the department now attend university career fairs, interview students and make conditional job offers for suitable candidates, subject to satisfactory completion of their qualification. The council has also changed the way it supports people in achieving a Social Work Diploma. Previously the only route available to staff was through the Open University, but the council has recently established trainee social worker posts enabling employees to undertake studies on a full-time basis.

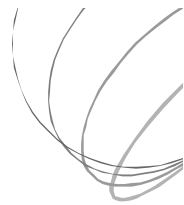
192. The council is developing a partnership with Job Centres where job-seekers will be trained by the Job Centre and the council will guarantee to interview all candidates completing the training successfully. The council hopes that in the long term this will attract a wider range of people into the profession and promote social work as a career, with possible progression from care worker to qualified social worker.

SWSI recognises improvements in training

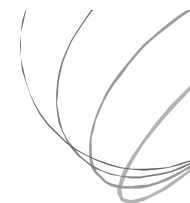
'The council has changed the training team's structure and it should be able to put the performance management system into practice correctly so this raises training standards.'

The 2003 Local Reports, Chief Social Work Inspector

193. The council is considering including clauses in its contracts to prevent staff from moving to other employers immediately they complete their training. It has also re-organised its training and development team so that it has specialist staff. The department acknowledges that the staff appraisal system needs to have better links with training plans. The SWSI report comments favourably on the council's revised training arrangements and planned improvements in the staff appraisal system.



194. Previously training was matched to the post held, so that more junior staff could not undertake advanced qualifications. Now staff can undertake advanced qualifications when they are ready and where this fits with the council's projected needs. In this way the council feels it will be able to meet its future workforce needs. The council should ensure that its revised training strategies address the issue of declining rates of qualified staff in residential homes for older people.



Housing

There is sound evidence to show that the council is providing a good housing service for most users.

195. The council has a stock of around 9,000 houses. It collects rents of around £17 million per year. Around £12 million a year is spent on repairs and maintenance. There is a waiting list of around 3,500 applicants for council housing, with 1,041 houses re-let during 2002/03. The department received around 1,200 applications under the homeless persons legislation.
196. Housing services are inspected by Communities Scotland and a detailed inspection has recently been completed. Reliance has been placed on this work for the audit. The inspection report concludes that the department is delivering a good service for the overwhelming majority of users, but highlights the need for improvements in a number of areas, including setting targets, monitoring and reporting performance, and in the overall approach to equalities. A full copy of the report can be found on the Communities Scotland website: www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk
197. The council's housing stock is in good condition, rents are relatively low, and there are good levels of tenant satisfaction. Communities Scotland awards grades on a four point scale, ranging from A (excellent) to D (poor). Angus was awarded grade B (good) for Housing Management and for Property Management, and grade C (fair) for homeless services.
198. The report identifies three main weaknesses affecting the overall quality of housing services, which are in line with our findings in other parts of the council:
- **Performance monitoring:** There is not a consistent use of measurable targets which would help to ensure that key objectives are delivered
 - **Public reporting:** Information published on the performance of housing services is essentially limited to the Statutory Performance Indicators and does not give a full picture in terms of service standards and user feedback.
 - **Equalities:** The approach to equalities is relatively underdeveloped and the housing service may not be meeting all of its obligations to combat race inequality.



Access to housing

199. The council has a good system for allocating houses to applicants, based on needs and using a point system to place applicants on one of six priority waiting lists. However, Communities Scotland's report identifies some aspects which need to be improved:

- Applicants from outside the Angus area are being restricted in their access to the housing waiting lists, this is contrary to the council's policy and to its statutory duties.
- Nomination arrangements with other social landlords in Angus are not working effectively.

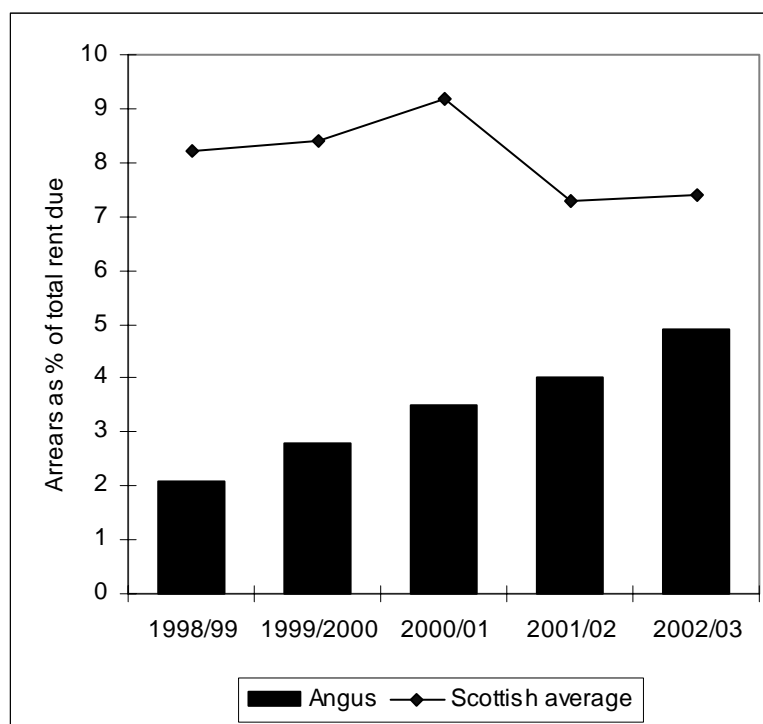
Rent arrears and housing benefit

200. In 2002/03, rent arrears in Angus were 4.9% of the total rent due. This is well below the national average of 7.4%. However, it is widely accepted that social factors, such as local levels of deprivation, are an important influence on rent arrears. Other similar councils have arrears of around 3.0%. Moreover, the level of rent arrears has been steadily increasing over the past four years (exhibit 13).

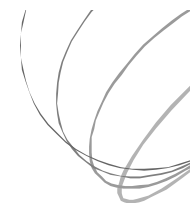
Exhibit 13

Rent arrears

Rent arrears within Angus have been steadily increasing in recent years and are now above the level achieved by other similar councils.



Source: Accounts Commission, Statutory Performance Indicators



201. The council makes annual benefits payments of around £22 million. The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate (BFI) carries out detailed inspections of local arrangements for paying benefits. In its 2003 report the BFI found that the council has recently made major improvements in its administration of Housing and Council Tax Benefits, but there are still concerns about the time taken by the council to process benefits payments.

202. This issue was first raised by the BFI report in 2000 and Communities Scotland identified the need for better communication between benefits staff and those working to recover rent arrears. Statutory Performance Indicators show that in 2002/03 the council took 79 days to process new claims for benefit, against a Scottish average of 49 days.

203. There is evidence that the council is also concerned at its processing times and has taken steps to address the issue. These include:

- Applying successfully for national funding of an additional evening staff shift to help reduce the backlog of benefits claims still to be processed
- Requesting the assistance of the BFI's specialist Performance Improvement Action Team to suggest ways in which the council's procedures could be made more efficient.

204. This is an area that will be monitored by the BFI and the council's external auditor.

Maintenance and repairs

205. The council's housing stock is in relatively good condition. Substantial sums have been spent maintaining and upgrading housing, with a programme to install double glazing in all houses by 2004 and central heating by 2007. Communities Scotland reports that the council '...does not have a long term investment strategy and whilst it has developed a number of service specific standards like those used in improvement programmes or in respect of void houses, it has not agreed a specific standard as an overall objective for its investment programmes.'

206. The council responds to requests for repairs and carries them out quickly. It sets challenging targets for response times; for example it is one of only three councils in Scotland that sets a two hour target for emergency repairs. It is performing well against these targets (exhibit 14).

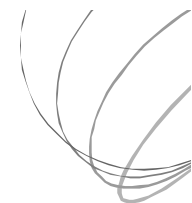


Exhibit 14

Repairs completed within target times.

The council has a good record in responding quickly to requests from tenants for repairs.

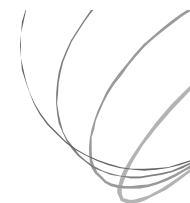
Category	Target	Angus % of jobs within target 2001/02	Angus % of jobs within target 2002/03	Scottish average 2002/03
Emergency	2 hours	91.2	92.1	91.6
Urgent	2 days	80.6	86.2	91.2
Routine	10 days	75.8	83.4	82.9
Non essential	20 days	68.9	67.8	86.7
Average performance		79.9%	84.4%	86.2%

Source: Communities Scotland report

Homelessness

207. Communities Scotland has identified significant areas for improvement in the services provided for homeless people. The council could do more to identify and support vulnerable tenants at risk of homelessness. In addition, in a high proportion of cases, the council loses contact with the applicant or the applicant withdraws from the process. This issue was identified by the council in 2000, but it still lost contact with 36% of its homeless cases in 2002/03, compared with a national average of 9%. There may be a variety of reasons for this, such as cases not being progressed quickly or staff not actively maintaining contact with applicants.

208. A shortage of appropriate housing has led to increasing use of bed & breakfast accommodation, with consequent concerns about the quality of service provided. A proper assessment is needed of the level of temporary accommodation required.



Leisure services

There is no evidence of serious concerns about the performance of leisure services. Key areas have achieved national quality standards and are relatively well used.

209. The Leisure Services Department is responsible for managing sports and outdoor leisure, and cultural services. It is difficult to form a clear picture of how the department is performing as, in common with other parts of the council, it does not have a systematic approach to monitoring its performance.

210. The Service Plan 2003-07 contains many pages of detailed targets, but these are largely concerned with internal processes rather than measuring services in terms of outputs or outcomes. There is no clear prioritisation of targets and there is limited reporting of performance. Councillors are generally informed of achievements, rather than presented with the full range of results.

211. Activity levels, such as attendance numbers, give some measure of performance. While these are reported to councillors, they are difficult to interpret without any comparisons or targets. As part of a corporate initiative, Leisure Services is currently developing its balanced scorecard, which should help to address this concern.

Sport and leisure

212. There is evidence that the council's leisure centres and swimming pools are well-run. The council has adopted the national Quest² quality scheme, which is specifically designed for the sports and leisure industry. Around half of the councils in Scotland have expressed a commitment to the Quest standards, but Angus is the only council in which all leisure centres and swimming pools have achieved Quest status.

213. Usage levels for sports facilities are relatively high in Angus. Attendances per head of population are among the highest in Scotland (exhibit 15).

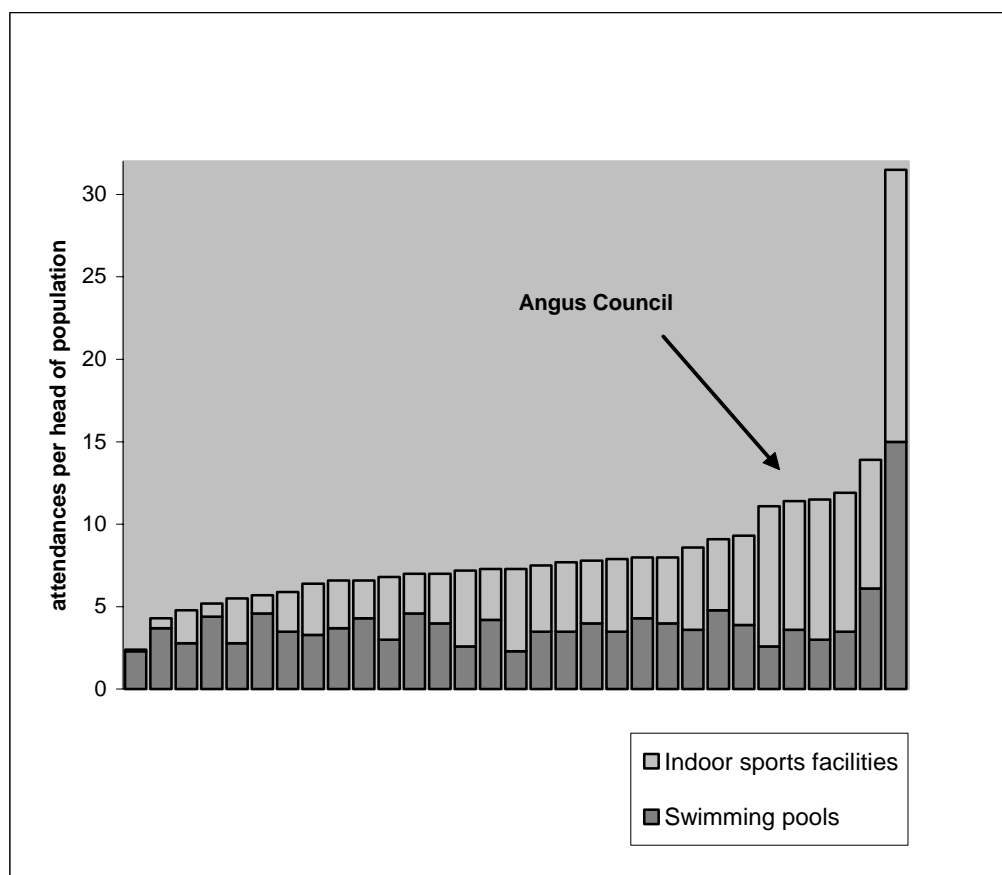
² Quest is a UK wide quality scheme for sport and leisure supported by the UK Sports Councils and a committee of representative organisations from the industry.



Exhibit 15

Use of sports facilities in 2002/03

There is relatively high usage of the council's swimming pools and leisure centres.

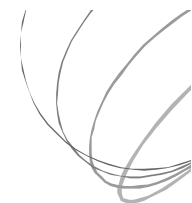


Source: Accounts Commission, Statutory Performance Indicators

Culture and libraries

214. All six of the council's museums and galleries are registered under the Museums and Galleries Commission's scheme, indicating that they are meeting expected standards. The Service Plan for 2003/07 contains a long list of detailed targets for museums and galleries. However, almost all are concerned with internal procedures, such as producing leaflets, participating in various committees and forums, and seeking funding for new initiatives. It is therefore difficult to use these as a measure of the services being delivered to the public.

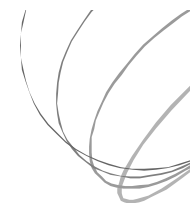
215. Visitor numbers are reported annually to councillors, but no targets are set. Attendance levels have increased significantly in the theatres and halls managed by the council, from 168,000 in 1998/99 to 233,000 in 2002/03.



216. The council uses the five Statutory Performance Indicators to report the performance of its library service to the public. These show a decline in the number of books and audio/visual material borrowed, falling by 21% since 1999/2000. This is in line with national trends.

217. One factor contributing to this fall in borrowing may be that fewer new additions are being made to the stock of books. While the council has adopted national targets for additions it has not met these target levels in recent years.

218. Books remain a major part of the library service, but the balance is changing towards new electronic media such as the internet. New national Performance Indicators, introduced in 2002/03, indicate that the use of computer terminals within Angus's libraries is above the Scottish average.



Planning and transport

There is some evidence of sound performance in planning and transport services. Reliance was placed on the department's balanced scorecard, summarising overall performance.

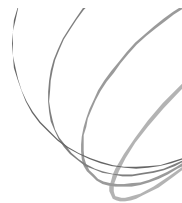
219. The Planning and Transport Department is responsible for overseeing the strategic framework for the development of the Angus area, including the Structure and Local Plans (setting out overall policies on land use and development), the Environmental Strategy, and a Local Transport Strategy. The department also deals with planning applications and building warrants.

220. The department is relatively advanced in using the balanced scorecard, with a scorecard completed for each of the last two financial years. However, there is still scope for significant improvements to be made. For example, it can be difficult to assess many of the results as there are few clear criteria for success. The scorecard is produced at departmental level, but it needs to be used more actively by front-line managers. There is also no evidence that elected members discuss the scorecards when assessing the department's performance. However, the balanced scorecard results for 2002/03 present a picture of a department which is committed to continuous improvement and is achieving some success.

221. A detailed assessment of Angus Council's approach to preparing its development plans was carried out by the Scottish Executive Planning Audit Unit in 2000. This was one of the first in a series of audits intended to cover every Scottish council. The report concluded that 'development planning is well organised and efficient' and no significant concerns were identified. The council is one of only seven in Scotland to have a fully up to date Structure Plan and Local Plan, confirming the effectiveness of its arrangements. It has also published a Local Transport Strategy.

222. The time taken to process planning applications is around the national average, but this is not sufficient to meet national targets. The council has already identified this issue and set its own improvement targets.

223. The Scottish Executive sets national targets for the time taken by councils to process building warrants and certificates of completion. Angus Council met two of these targets in 2002/03. It did not meet the target for responding to requests for building warrants within 15 days, but it was above the national average.



Roads

There is no evidence of serious concerns about the performance of the Roads Department, although there are limitations in its performance monitoring system. Some measures exist, which generally indicate a sound performance, but these do not cover the full range of activity.

224. The Roads Department provides and maintains the local roads network within Angus (the Scottish Executive is responsible for the A90 trunk road). It is currently managing major capital projects, such as converting the A92 to dual carriageway and replacing the Montrose bridge. The main sections within the department that provide services directly for the public are roads maintenance, lighting, traffic management and engineering and design services.

225. In common with other parts of the council, the Roads Department does not have a systematic approach to monitoring its performance, with the exception of SPIs. For example, councillors are provided with an annual summary of activity and achievements, but not a statement of targets and actual performance. The Roads Department is currently developing a balanced scorecard, which should help to address this concern.

Roads maintenance

226. The maintenance of the local road network is a key issue which the council recognises needs to be addressed. It has identified a maintenance backlog valued at £77 million and has plans to improve the condition of the road network. Increases in council funding, along with additional money from the Scottish Executive, have helped to achieve a four-fold increase in the volume of roads resurfaced. However, there is evidence that this increased activity is still insufficient to properly maintain the local road network.

227. Poor road condition is an issue affecting most, if not all, councils in Scotland. In order to help quantify the scale of the problem and prioritise action, the council has supported the recent Scottish Roads Maintenance Condition Survey (SRMCS). The recently published SRMCS results for 2003/04 show Angus is amongst the best performing councils in Scotland.

228. The Service Plan for 2003/04 does not contain any specific targets for the proportion of the road network to be resurfaced or treated and this will make it difficult for councillors and the public to know how it has performed in this priority area. The council does intend to utilise the Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey as a performance monitoring tool as its coverage extends across the road network.



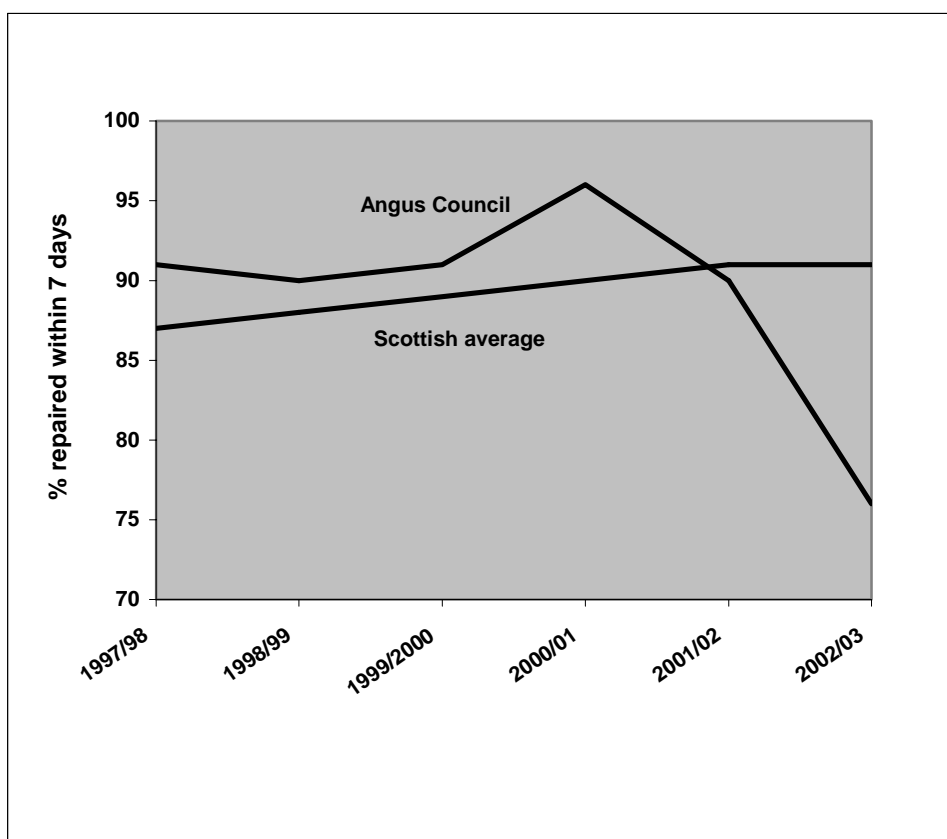
Lighting

229. One of the Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) measures the proportion of street lighting faults repaired within seven days. In earlier years, Angus Council's performance was consistently above the Scottish average, but it has fallen sharply over the past year or so (exhibit 16). The council has an action plan in place to address this, and reports that the Statutory Performance Indicator is now on an upward trend.

Exhibit 16

Time taken to repair street lights

Angus Council is taking longer to repair its street lights than in earlier years. Its performance is now well below the Scottish average.



Source: Accounts Commission, Statutory Performance Indicators

230. The council has linked the fall in performance to the need to resource a significant upgrading of its festive lighting in 2002 and 2003. This followed a transfer of responsibility for the service from the Property Services Department. This example illustrates the need to improve the effectiveness of the links between the council's budget and service planning procedures, particularly where a change in responsibilities takes place.

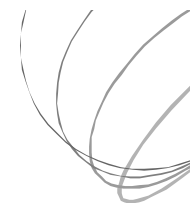


231. Few other effective measures of performance are used by the service. Its 'Performance Supplement 2002/03' presents Statutory Performance Information on the cost of street lighting per lamp (which is falling) and the proportion of street lighting columns replaced per annum (which is increasing). However, on its own, this does not provide a clear picture of performance for the activity. Reference to targets, the condition of the assets, and other operational factors associated with street lighting, for example, would make reports to elected members and customers more useful and interesting.

Traffic management

232. In partnership with Tayside police, the council aims to improve road safety. It has overseen the implementation of a number of local and national initiatives, with some evidence of success. These include the Tayside Safety Camera Partnership, and the 'Pass Plus' and the 'Twenty's Plenty' schemes.

233. There is no information on the improvements in road safety that have been achieved directly as a result of action taken by the council. However, road safety statistics, maintained by the Scottish Executive, show that the number of road fatalities has fallen within Angus in line with, or even ahead of, national targets.



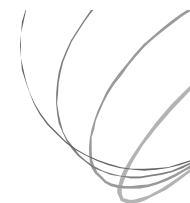
Environmental and consumer protection services

This service shows evidence of some sound performance. Its performance management arrangements are adequate but require further development, including a need to consult with customers and involve elected members in monitoring performance.

234. The Environmental and Consumer Protection Services Department is responsible for environmental and public health; public cleansing and waste management; and trading standards and consumer protection.
235. The departmental performance management information is predominantly based on SPIs and on performance against budgets. A balanced scorecard has been developed but it has not yet reached a point where it can be used as a core performance management tool for departmental and team managers and elected members. For example, some of the measures have no clear success criteria.
236. Staff management appears to be well developed, with a routine performance monitoring and development system in place, but this has yet to be rolled out to the ex-DSO staff who have only recently transferred into the department.
237. Limited formal performance reporting is provided to members. This means that members are not in a position to monitor the performance of service activities and are likely to focus only on service issues that directly concern their constituents such as dog fouling or litter enforcement.
238. The council has not subjected former CCT services to competition or rigorous review since the 1997 moratorium. These services have now been brought back into the department. It will be important for a system to be established that allows the council to demonstrate the competitiveness of these activities. The audit found no evidence of a full option appraisal in the decision to transfer CCT services back into the department.

Environmental and public health

239. Available evidence suggests slightly below average, but improving, performance in environmental health, and good performance in food standards enforcement. Performance is improving in the percentage of environmental health inspections undertaken within the set time periods and is now close to the Scottish average. There is a similar trend for workplace health and safety inspections. Until recently Angus was one of only two Scottish councils to inspect the 'most frequent' category of premises only every two years, but these are now inspected on an annual basis.



240. The most recent audit by the Food Standards Agency identified a number of strengths in food standards enforcement with no key areas for improvement.

241. Compared to other councils, the service shows good response times to pest control service requests and noise complaints, and has been successfully tackling contaminated land and littering, dog fouling and fly-tipping.

Waste management

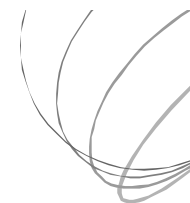
242. Waste management performance is good, and Angus is the top Scottish council in terms of waste recycling. In 2002/03, the council recycled 23% of its waste, close to the Scottish Executive target of 25%.

243. This high level of recycling, along with the cost of generating electricity from waste, has meant that the combined cost per premise of waste collection and disposal has increased by more than the Scottish average over the last three years (from £73 in 2000/01 to £105 in 2002/03). However, as other councils catch up with Angus they are likely to experience similar increases.

Trading standards and consumer protection

244. The trading standards and consumer protection service was reviewed by Audit Scotland in 2002 as part of a national study. The council's performance was average for the size of the service. A number of areas for improvement were identified, which the council has been progressing.

245. The service was considered to be particularly good at consumer advice, information and education, but needed to improve services and advice for businesses and to engage better with stakeholders. Since that review, the council has been developing a Consumer Support Network with the Citizens' Advice Bureaux and has addressed an identified shortfall in the number of qualified trading standards officers.



Economic development

The economy is identified as a priority area for the council in the community and corporate plans. It is recognised, however, that much of the work on economic development can only be done across a wider geographic area in partnership with other agencies.

There is no evidence of major concerns with the operation of the Economic Development Unit. A new performance management regime is intended which will introduce performance indicators and assist in future assessment of the unit's performance.

246. The role of the council's Economic Development Unit is to develop and implement the agreed economic strategy for Angus. The unit works to stimulate the Angus economy, with an emphasis on sustainability. It has to take into account the competing aspirations of the Angus burghs and the needs of an extensive rural area. It is involved in extensive partnership working.

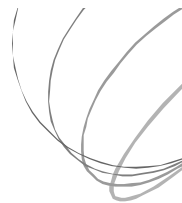
Angus Economic Development Strategy 2003-08

247. The Angus Economic Development Strategy was approved by the council in January 2003. The council agreed that the strategy should be implemented, in partnership with Scottish Enterprise Tayside, through the Angus Economic Development Partnership. The strategy will be used to produce a Tayside-wide economic development strategy.

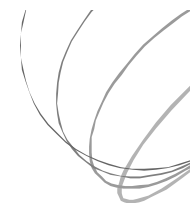
248. There is a broad relationship between the Economic Development Unit's key objectives and the strategic objectives contained within the Economic Development Strategy. Whilst the Economic Development Unit places greater emphasis on job creation, there is general strategic coherence between the two documents.

249. The Community Plan, published in 2000, set out 12 areas where the community planning partners wished to improve the economy in Angus. The Community Plan was produced before the Economic Development Unit produced its key objectives and there is a reasonable degree of coherence between the two. The Community Plan was designed to set out a ten-year vision for the economy of Angus shared by all of the community planning partners, while the council's key objectives focused more clearly upon the council's responsibilities and corporate objectives.

250. There are no nationally agreed performance indicators for economic development, but the council has recently established performance indicators for the Unit. A total of 17 performance indicators have been agreed against which the council will monitor its economic development activity. This new



system took effect in the 2003/04 financial year and should develop further with the establishment of baseline data, annual targets set against each PI, and regular reporting to elected members. Currently the chief executive reports highlights and achievements of the Economic Development Unit to each meeting of the Infrastructure Services Committee.



Part 5: What needs to get better?

Continuous improvement to public services and local governance lies at the heart of the Best Value and Community Planning policy framework. Officers and elected members must be fully focused on key policy objectives and the needs of customers and communities, and be driven by a desire to achieve the highest possible standards in service delivery.

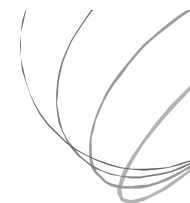
Angus Council's plans to respond to the requirements of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 cover most of the key corporate actions that are needed. However, more effort is required at service level to bring about continuous improvement and establish clear targets for improving service delivery to customers. The council also needs to ensure that the action points arising from improvement plans are specific, measurable, action-orientated, realistic and timed (S.M.A.R.T.)

Developing an improvement culture

251. Continuous improvement to public services and local governance lies at the heart of the Best Value and Community Planning policy framework. To make progress in this, local authorities must develop an improvement culture across all service areas. Officers and elected members must be fully focused on key policy objectives and the needs of customers and communities, and be driven by a desire to achieve the highest possible standards in service delivery. This requires an operating environment in which areas in need of improvement can be clearly identified and comfortably discussed.

252. Angus Council is beginning to develop an improvement culture and become more open to change. There is evidence that it is responsive to improvement recommendations arising from audit and inspection. For example, the recently published Audit Scotland follow-up study on internal audit services demonstrates that Angus has significantly improved in this area even though it was already performing well when the original baseline report was published in 2001. Similarly, the recent follow up visit on Education Services by HM Inspectorate reports that steady progress is being made in the council on these activities, again from a relatively strong starting point.

253. The council has consistently paid close attention to the outcome of external scrutiny, working in partnership with the Inspectorate/audit body concerned. It is now important that the council takes ownership of the improvement agenda itself and applies it across all of its activities in a systematic and comprehensive manner.



254. In addition to improvement plans at a corporate level, improvement action is planned at service level including responses to inspection reports.

Key areas in which improvements are needed

255. A number of the key areas in which Angus needs to improve, such as performance management, public performance reporting and equalities, will tend to be shared by other councils in Scotland as they reflect the new statutory duties and associated guidance.

256. Angus Council's leadership has taken a cautious, evolutionary approach to change, but there is now scope to pick up the pace at which Best Value is implemented to realise significant benefits. More extensive and robust information is required on alternative ways of working, on new ways of delivering services and on how things are done elsewhere. This will assist review teams and provide elected members with a wider set of options from which to choose the solution best suited to the needs of the Angus community.

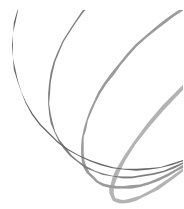
257. There is a need for the council to ensure that objectives set out in the Corporate Plan are suitably linked with the Community Plan and result in specific actions in service plans. In addition, service plans should express a clear commitment to improvements for customers and users.

258. The progress being made by the council to develop the links between policy priorities, service planning, resource allocations and budgets should be continued. The new approach should encourage redirection and redistribution of resources in order to support change and to ensure that policy and service priorities are effectively funded. This will require corporate discipline and the establishment of systems to monitor trends and demonstrate spending against policy areas.

259. In general, better project implementation is needed. More explicit targets for outcomes should be set so that intended benefits are clearly identified and communicated, and results achieved more readily.

260. More systematic measurement and monitoring of performance is required at all levels in the authority. It is for the council to deploy the particular system that most suits its own arrangements, but the Statutory Guidance on Best Value points to the key features that must be in place. In particular improvements in this area must address the implementation problems associated with the balanced scorecard, ensuring effective ownership and commitment throughout the council.

261. Producing baseline performance reports for all services to the end of 2003/04 would help the council to identify how it is currently performing on the key things that determine a customer focused, high quality service for each activity. A set of challenging, SMART targets for improvement could then be established for priority areas. These should represent the things that most need to be improved, the



things that matter most to customers, and other key factors. This would then act as a driver for improved service delivery across the council in the coming months.

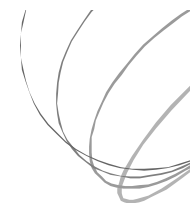
262. Management needs to make better use of benchmarking or other comparative analysis, both corporately and across services. Current limitations prevent the council from fully assessing the level at which it could be performing, and make it difficult to judge whether targets for improvement, where they exist, are challenging enough.

263. Performance needs to be reported internally and externally in accordance with statutory guidance. This will involve a range of methods designed to suit the particular purpose and audience concerned. For example:

- Senior management needs detailed and technical data to ensure professional standards and practice are being achieved and improved.
- Corporate management needs information on cross-cutting issues and performance on key objectives and policies.
- Elected members require information on progress towards policy objectives, areas of strength and weakness in performance, topical issues of concern to customers and local communities and details of how other similar councils are performing.
- Service users want information about the specific area of the council they come into regular contact with and how this will be meeting their needs in future.
- Local people in general require information about how the overall needs of the Angus community are being addressed and to what degree the council is achieving value for money.

264. The council should establish corporate standards for systematically reporting service performance to elected members to ensure that they can perform their scrutiny role effectively. More active monitoring of performance by elected members, including setting challenging targets for service delivery, can contribute to the developing improvement culture in Angus; maintain close links between performance and policy priorities; and ensure that early remedial action on performance is taken when required.

265. The council needs to ensure greater consistency and adherence to equal opportunities. The council has its Equal Opportunities Policy and Race Equality Scheme in place, but coordination, action planning and monitoring are required to ensure these have an impact.



Monitoring progress

266. The council already has plans for improvement, in particular plans to address the specific requirements of Best Value and Community Planning. The audit was able to confirm that, in the main, these respond to the areas most in need of attention, but it will be important for the council to ensure the corporate discipline necessary for effective implementation of these developments.
267. Following consideration of this report by the Accounts Commission, Angus Council will be asked to agree an Improvement Action Plan detailing how it intends to address the issues identified. This should be formulated on SMART criteria to provide a suitable basis for monitoring progress and a clear basis on which completion or success can be demonstrated.
268. In the course of the next two years, the council's appointed external auditor will carry out follow-up audit work to establish the progress that has made with each of the agreed improvement actions. This will influence the timing of the next audit of the council's statutory duties on Best Value and Community Planning.

Angus Council

The Audit of Best Value and Community Planning



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