






Local government in Scotland: Overview 2023

Case studies

ACCOUNTS COMMISSION 

We have collated case studies to provide some further illustrative examples and practice based around the five themes we focused on in the report.

These case studies have been sourced from our audit work during the year. The list is not exhaustive and there will be other good examples. For instance, the Improvement Service showcases a wide range of case studies on their [website](#).

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Finances and resources

Angus Council has delivered substantial savings over the past six years but will need more radical change to address the significant financial pressures it faces

Recently, the programme has been undergoing a transitioning phase to address financial challenges and now primarily focuses on savings delivery and assurance. It consists of several projects which enable change, invest in improving outcomes and deliver substantial financial savings.

During the six-year period 2016/17 to 2021/22, Angus Council delivered significant savings of £49.8 million through the Change Programme. The council have consistently delivered these recurring savings and continued to provide all the services they are required to by law while showing a reasonable overall performance picture. The council does, however, need to ensure performance targets are being met.

As councils face the most challenging budget-setting context seen for many years, the financial pressures on Angus Council are significant. The Finance and Change Plan 2022–25 identified a funding gap of £13.9 million for 2022/23. This will be addressed mainly by the Change Programme savings which is expected to deliver £6.8 million of budgeted savings in 2022/23 and £13.3 million over 2023/24 and 2024/25. Despite the council achieving significant savings over the past six years, at present this is not sufficient to bridge the identified funding gap and hence, more radical change is required to transform the scale and delivery of services.

Source: Audit Scotland using information from Angus Council's BVAR

East Dunbartonshire Council incorporate service level demands and backlogs into their strategic planning and budget allocations

Individual council services track changing demand levels across all areas. The impact of increased demands, unmet need and service backlogs is fully considered by executive officers and their management teams as part of the council's budget process.

The process for managing backlogs and demand is outlined in the council's finance updates and feeds into ongoing strategic planning, 'East Dunbartonshire Forward in Partnership' and the council's updated corporate risk register. A report setting out the challenges related to income, expenditure and the financial gap is presented to the council.

The council's ongoing engagement activities across a range of services and communities, coupled with their participation in national data collection, sharing and benchmarking initiatives all contribute to their understanding of demand and unmet need. This includes close liaison with colleagues in the health and social care partnership on these issues.

Source: Audit Scotland dataset using information from East Dunbartonshire Council

City of Edinburgh Council are progressing with plans to raise income through the introduction of a Transient Visitor Levy (TVL) in the city

In 2018, City of Edinburgh Council undertook a consultation on a draft proposal for a Transient Visitor Levy (TVL) in Edinburgh. The aim of the consultation was to gather views on whether a TVL should be introduced to ensure sustainable funding for the long-term success of Edinburgh and Scottish tourism. More than 2,560 individuals took part in a survey or public discussion forum. Eighty-five per cent of respondents expressed strong support for a TVL. Following this, the Scottish Government agreed for a local discretionary TVL to be introduced in 2020.

Council officers are currently working with local stakeholders, COSLA and the Scottish Government to develop the TVL legislation and any subsequent regulations. The council are also in the process of shaping the scope of the scheme and exploring opportunities for any revenue generated from the tax.

Depending on the final model agreed by the council following the regulatory processes, an Edinburgh TVL could raise between £5 million and £35 million a year as recurring revenue. Officers have prepared a list of key areas which would form the basis for revenue priorities, one example is destination promotion where the council would invest in focused promotion of Edinburgh including encouraging visitor dispersal out of the city centre.

The introduction of a TVL is still in the early stages and the overall outcome of the scheme will not be known for at least two years. An updated position on data and refreshed scope of an Edinburgh TVL is due to be provided to the Committee in March 2023 alongside, a supporting proposal for revenue priorities and a resourcing plan.

Source: Audit Scotland using information from City of Edinburgh Council

Glasgow City Council are progressing with plans to raise income through the introduction of a charging tariff on the council's public Electric Vehicle Charging network.

To support the increased demand for electric vehicles, with up to one million of Scotland's three million vehicles predicted to be electric by 2030, significant investment of commercial charging infrastructure is crucial. Over 330 charging points have been installed across the city and a further 119 are planned to be brought in throughout 2023. As a result, a charging tariff has the potential to generate significant income for the council.

The council approved a new charging tariff in April 2021 however, there has been a delay to the scheme due to several factors including the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is expected that the tariff will provide income to cover some of the cost of operating and maintaining the public charging points which is estimated to cost £1.35 million in 2023. The council's draft budget 2023/24 outlines that savings of £450,000 would be generated by the implementation of a new charging tariff in 2023/24.

An update report presented to the Environment and Liveable Neighbourhoods City Policy Committee in January 2023 stated that the tariff should be in place by April 2023. However, there are still several factors that need to be considered when setting the tariff. This includes the council needing to ensure the tariff is aligned with other local authorities in the Glasgow City Region to minimise 'EV tourism' where drivers make longer journeys across authority boundaries to take advantage of lower tariffs.

Source: Audit Scotland using information from Glasgow City Council



Leadership

West Lothian Council has an Elected Member Development Programme, which includes a virtual/online structured induction programme

Following the 2022 General Election, West Lothian Council delivered a structured induction programme for elected members from 9 May to 24 June 2022.

Before attending the induction, a Welcome Pack was issued to members to provide them with background knowledge to improve their understanding of the training sessions. The Welcome Pack also contained various documents such as the Councillor's Code of Conduct and Members' Role Descriptions. In total, over 50 training sessions on essential topics were delivered remotely via the Elected Member Development Site on the council's intranet. Most of the sessions were also recorded to ensure they were easily accessible.

The council also have an ongoing Elected Member Development Programme which focuses on key topics including Climate Change, Emergency Planning and Quality Assurance Procedures. Members are also supported to complete a Personal Development Plan to allow them to identify and discuss specific and individual needs. Members are encouraged to review their role and consider what will help them to improve their performance and develop knowledge, skills, and abilities. This could be through training events, coaching, working with an experienced colleague or project work.

In July 2022, an evaluation of the induction programme was undertaken where elected members were asked to complete a survey. Participants were required to consider ten different aspects of the induction programme including the training topics covered and admin support. Using a five-point scale, where 1 = excellent and 5 = very poor, participants provided a rating for each area. Overall, the feedback received was positive with the average score awarded across all ten aspects being excellent. Officers who delivered the events were also asked to provide their views on the success of the programme.

Source: Audit Scotland dataset using information from West Lothian Council

Wigan Council developed 'The Deal' to deliver collaborative change

Wigan Council, faced with substantial budget cuts, devised new ways to continue providing services and serving the community. The council created The Deal, an informal agreement between the public sector, citizens, community groups and businesses to create a better borough. The Deal's main objectives are to eliminate waste from the council's budget and reduce demand for services while improving the lives of citizens, covering healthcare, children, social services and community funding. It is seen as successful in many ways: Wigan Council has reduced its expenses, improved certain services, frozen council tax, and improved health outcomes for citizens. A 'clear narrative developed about the changes the council wanted to bring about and why they were needed', informing how staff developed ideas and put the Wigan Deal into practice. This resulted in a shift from control and management to enabling and convening.

Source: Improvement Service



Collaboration

‘Climate Ready Clyde’, a cross-sector approach, including eight councils, to tackling climate change

Climate Ready Clyde is a cross-sector initiative funded by 14 organisations, including eight councils, and is supported by the Scottish Government. Its purpose is to create a shared climate change adaptation vision, strategy and action plan for the whole of the Glasgow City region. The strategy includes 16 flagship actions aimed at addressing systemic challenges and creating the conditions for change. It also includes three ambitious targets, with the aim that by 2025 Climate Ready Clyde will have:

- increased the resilience of over 140,000 of the region’s most vulnerable people to the impact of climate change
- closed the £184 million a year gap in the region’s adaptation finances
- involved 125 new organisations, community groups and businesses in supporting the Glasgow City region to adapt.

The strategy includes detailed analysis of the financial investment needed to achieve these aims, the gaps that exist and the measures it will take to secure the necessary finances. The strategy also sets out how communities can be actively involved in decision-making.

Source: [Scotland’s councils’ approach to addressing climate change](#), Accounts Commission, September 2022

Dumfries and Galloway Council’s Economic Development Capital Programme focuses on supporting place-based economic development by investing in projects which promote social and economic recovery as well as resilience

Many of the regeneration projects within the Economic Development Capital Programme are delivered by community-based Project Delivery Partners, helping to build local capacity and empower communities to develop solutions to local issues. During 2021/22 several community groups received capital funding to develop their projects which aim to assist in the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

For example, £1.4 million of grant funding, secured from the Scottish Government’s Regeneration Capital Fund, was disbursed to complete a multi-year regeneration project. This project was led by the council’s Project Delivery Partner ‘All Roads Lead to Whithorn Trust’ and focused on the redevelopment of the town’s Victorian ‘new’ townhall. The redeveloped hall now incorporates Whithorn Community Hub and aims to target communities that are rurally isolated and experience significant levels of access deprivation in the South Machars district of Dumfries and Galloway.

Source: Audit Scotland using information Dumfries and Galloway Council annual accounts

Clackmannanshire Council works with local public sector partners and relevant third sector partners to deliver the STRIVE (Safeguarding through Rapid Intervention) programme

The STRIVE (Safeguarding through Rapid Intervention) team is a multi-agency team made up of a Police Officer, social work team leaders from Children and Adult Services, Housing Officers, Money Advice, a part-time Education Officer, Criminal Justice staff and relevant third sector partners.

Sharing crucial pieces of information at the earliest opportunity between trusted partners means practitioners are better able to 'join the dots' to understand the overall vulnerability of cases and share knowledge of existing support and interventions under way: this better informs the most appropriate action, reduces the likelihood and impact of people experiencing crisis and reduces the intensive resource required by services.

The benefits of STRIVE identified were: preventing homelessness by supporting individuals and families to obtain and sustain new or more suitable tenancies; improving financial security by undertaking immediate financial assessments; improving access to benefits entitlements and access to further education and employability; reducing police involvement; providing a rapid, direct pathway from the STRIVE table to mental health and wellbeing supports; reducing alcohol and drug use; keeping families together; supporting those fleeing domestic violence; improving fire safety in the home; and arranging support to undertake household tasks.

As part of the Family Wellbeing Partnership in Alloa South and East and building on the success of STRIVE to date, the team have added an early intervention approach. This has included allocation of staff to provide support for families affected by domestic violence, specifically to provide focused work for alleged perpetrators. This work is delivered in partnership with SACRO.

In addition, alongside other Family Wellbeing Partnership activity, Clackmannanshire Council have been working with parents in local primary schools to develop a community led approach. This has involved drop-in sessions in schools focussing on issues such as money advice, parenting support and housing advice.

Source: Audit Scotland using information from COSLA and Clackmannanshire Council

Oxfordshire City Council worked with local partners to pool data and resources for the benefit of the community

Oxford City Community Impact Zone is the result of a partnership between Oxford City Council, Thames Valley Police and Oxfordshire County Council. They pooled their data and resources to work together for the benefit of the community.

By aggregating granular street-level data in innovative ways, they have identified community impact zones (or micro-neighbourhoods) in Oxford with high and overlapping inequalities. They've focussed attention in these areas on the following: matching 145 Oxfordshire children with volunteer tutors, supporting them to fulfil their academic potential; providing more fitness activities to help people get active and make new friends; providing opportunities for children to learn to swim and ride a bike; providing funding for local people to realise their ideas to improve the area; nurturing a growing network of peer supporters to support families to thrive; and coordinating over a thousand neighbours to help each other in response to the pandemic.

Source: Improvement Service



Workforce

Angus Council runs a resilience programme to promote staff wellbeing and a programme for leaders is in development

Angus Council's Understanding and developing personal resilience programme includes short pieces of online learning, face-to-face discussion in small groups and 1:1 coaching with a resilience coach.

The programme has run 30 times. It continues to be adapted, most recently to reflect the demands and challenges of work and life in 2023. Input on Managing Resilience and Wellbeing has been added to the council's Leadership Programme to support leaders to recognise signs and support others, while supporting their own resilience.

The focus is on creating connection and engagement and feedback is that participants learn not only from the more 'formal' learning, but also from each other and from their own reflections as they put learning into practice. The comment below reflects the typical feedback received after the programme:

"Resilience is an everyday practice. I can understand my strengths, my weaknesses and reflect how I am dealing with tricky situations. I need to prioritise my tasks, do things that I enjoy and be able to say no, when 'too much is too much'. It is ok to be worried, tired, sad, but I will have mechanisms/options/ activities/ people to support me when I need."

Source: Improvement Service

Dumfries and Galloway Council have created a wellbeing framework which includes cross-council and cross-sector collaboration

Dumfries and Galloway Council have created a wellbeing framework for staff with a rolling calendar of events across key wellbeing themes such as mental, physical, and financial wellbeing. There is also commitment to cross-council projects such as gambling harm awareness, financial planning and promoting a suite of wellbeing policies such as proactive stress prevention, and mental wellbeing which utilises over 100 volunteer champions and encourages individual wellness action plans and proactive self-referral to key services.

2023 will see ongoing work to embed wellbeing further by utilising survey and pulse check feedback to create a more tailored, trauma-informed flexible approach which includes development of a wellbeing promotion and signposting platform to assist and engage with harder to reach employee groups as well as externally into local communities.

The council incorporates collaboration with partner organisations such as the NHS to develop joint initiatives such as a Carers Forum, LGBT Network and Menopause Support Strategy.

Source: Improvement Service

North Lanarkshire Council updated its wellbeing communications to reflect new working practices and is also working closely with partners and providers to make sure the council's wellbeing offering meets staff needs

During 2022 North Lanarkshire Council worked closely with partners and providers to make sure the wellbeing offering was as relevant and well targeted as possible for colleagues needs.

The council's wellbeing communication strategy was also revised and updated to reflect new working practices. This focus on colleagues' needs as well as the review of the wellbeing communications led to a running programme of live and on demand bite size webinars that informally introduced wellbeing topics. These are accessible through the online portal which all staff can access 24/7 on any device. The portal is updated on a regular basis with new initiatives.

The focus on wellbeing supports across the organisation has been well received by staff with many of them getting help when they need it most.

Source: Improvement Service

South Lanarkshire Council developed a 'New Deal for Employees' which encourages and supports employees to prioritise their own health and wellbeing

South Lanarkshire are the first council in Scotland to ensure employees have the 'right to disconnect' outside of working hours. This means every employee is entitled to switch off outside of their normal working hours and enjoy their free time away from work without being disturbed.

As part of the deal an additional wellbeing day has been agreed to thank employees for their hard work to support local communities during the pandemic. The council recognise the extreme pressures their workforce is under and believe it is important that employees take some time to do an activity which would positively impact their own wellbeing and improve their personal resilience.

The council have also agreed to take forward a request from the Scottish Government Public Sector Pay Policy 2022 to consider pilots of a four-day working week which is expected to maintain productivity and develop a more engaged workforce.

Source: Audit Scotland using information from South Lanarkshire Council



Community needs and inequalities

Perth and Kinross Council used community engagement to shape proposals within the council's budget as well as their priorities for the next five-year Corporate Plan

Perth and Kinross Council asked residents their views on the council's budget and priorities for the next five years via an online survey which could be accessed through the council's Consultation Hub. The council also held several in person and online Budget and Corporate Plan engagement events where communities could voice their views on the proposed new vision for Perth and Kinross.

Residents were presented with the seven draft priorities of the council and asked whether they agree that these are the key issues that should be focused on. A summary of the responses from the survey and the engagement sessions was then included in the report considered by the council when agreeing the Corporate Plan and Budget. The council see community engagement to inform budget decisions as vital as it enables residents to express where they would prefer budget savings to come from and which services they would like to see protected.

In total, the survey was completed by 1,092 respondents and over 100 individuals participated in the virtual or in-person discussion sessions. The council have made some changes to their Corporate Plan 2022–27 in response to public feedback on how easy the key priorities are to understand and whether they are focussed on the right areas. For example, feedback suggested there was confusion around the word 'sustainable' and as result, changes have been made to ensure the council's visions are expressed clearly and concisely.

Out of the 1,092 responses, 1,084 visited the budget section of the survey which is a significant increase on previous years (739 in 2022/23, 642 in 2021/22 and 484 in 2020/21). Nearly all of the services which residents considered to be of lowest priority for investment have been included as savings proposals such as council-run events, Customer Service Centre efficiencies, and council-owned buildings.

Source: Audit Scotland using information from Perth and Kinross Council

Scottish Borders Council used community consultation to inform their budget proposals and undertook 'You said, We did' analysis to effectively show the link between views of residents and the Draft Financial Plan

Scottish Borders Council engaged with communities to inform their budget proposals through a 'Have Your Say' survey which closed at the end of January 2023. The survey was made available to members of the public via the council's website and hard copies were also distributed across the area through Contact Centres and Library Contact Centres. By using a survey, the council recognise that they 'are not always the people who know best' and see community engagement as a key component to decision-making processes within the council.

Residents were given the opportunity to voice their opinion on how they think resources and key services should be prioritised to address the challenges the council is facing. The survey also asked residents for feedback on several other areas such as public transport, health and social care and, the development of local plans within communities. The responses of the survey were then shared with Elected Members to inform the development of the 2023/24 budget proposals.

Feedback from residents highlighted the importance of protecting frontline services such as education and social work, and this is clearly reflected within the draft budget proposal as the council are committed to several capital projects. These include three new secondary schools, two new primary schools and two care villages. Additionally, Scottish Borders Council have committed to maintaining teacher numbers, pupil support assistants and pupil learning hours at their current level.

Residents also considered improving the roads network and cycleways to be a top priority for improving the community in which they live. In response to this, the council is investing £93 million over their five-year revenue and ten-year capital investment plan to improve roads, bridges and paths.

In total 866 members of the public participated in the survey and responses were shared with Elected Members to inform the development of the 2023/24 budget proposals. 'You said, We did' analysis was also conducted to effectively show the link between views of residents and the Draft Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2027/28 and was reported on at the council's budget-setting meeting. A further consultation on the draft Council Plan for 2023/24 was also undertaken with communities and partner organisations in the same timeframe to ensure alignment of the budget to the Council Plan.

Source: Audit Scotland using information from Scottish Borders Council

East Renfrewshire Council uses a wide range of consultation and engagement approaches to understand community needs and uses this intelligence to identify local priorities and inform strategic plans and service redesign

East Renfrewshire Council recently commissioned qualitative research on the impact of the pandemic to inform strategic decision-making and the re-design of services. Interviews and focus groups with various local communities were used to gather information on which services residents felt should be prioritised in relation to the renewal and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Economic Development team are also undertaking a consultation process which will lead to the development of Local Forums across East Renfrewshire to assist in taking forward improvements and forming Local Action Plans. This will provide residents with the opportunity to express any concerns they may have, enabling communities to be involved in shaping strategic priorities and designing projects.

Further approaches to engagement include:

- A 'detached Community Engagement' approach with council staff being out and around local communities, speaking to residents in outdoor spaces about their communities and the issues facing them.
- An online survey promoted through the council's social media platforms to gather residents' views about their communities and identify local priorities in relation to renewal and recovery from Covid-19.
- An annual Citizens Panel with a core question set which is augmented by additional topic questions on relevant strategic issues.
- A corporate engagement and consultation platform to host consultations on strategic and operational issues over the past year.
- Engagement through our parent and pupil councils
- Working on a cross-council basis on implementing the UNCRC elements of youth participation and voice in relation to making decisions about issues and services that affect them.
- Engaging around the council's emerging strategy for Get to Zero.
- A large-scale consultation in relation to three-year budget setting.

The council employs the Scottish Approach to Service Design which is a national framework to better involve people in the redesign of the services they use. Engaging with communities also helps the council to have a clearer understanding of how residents perceive service performance which helps to inform financial planning and East Renfrewshire's overall future vision. During the annual budget setting process, East Renfrewshire Council presented their long-term financial plan which covers the period 2022–28. Within the plan, the council recognise the long-term pressures that services are under and how this may impact demand within the community. Annual audit work highlighted that the financial plan clearly reflects the changes in demand of services and includes narrative on the wider political, societal, and economic changes such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact of Brexit.

Source: Audit Scotland dataset using information from East Renfrewshire Council

West Lothian Council uses community consultation to inform their budget priorities

The council has a public consultation titled 'Your Council Your Say'. The consultation will assist in the prioritisation and allocation of resources to activities that have the greatest impact with the council currently estimating a budget gap of £47.1 million over the period 2023/24 to 2027/28. The consultation is in three phases. Feedback from staff and communities in phase one of the consultation will be used to determine the council's priorities for 2023/24 to 2027/28. Phase two of the consultation seeks feedback on potential budget reductions and/or changes to services to balance the council's financial position over the period 2023/24 to 2025/26. Phase 3 of the consultation will consider budget options for 2026/27 and 2027/28.

Source: Audit Scotland dataset using information West Lothian Council

Inverclyde Council's Warm Hand of Friendship initiative was set up to help ensure that spaces, resources, advice and support are available throughout the council area for those who need them

Working with its partners and voluntary organisations, the council offers warm spaces or hubs and have delivered more than 400 activity sessions for adults and children such as book clubs and classes on IT skills. This has resulted in over 3,500 people being provided with a warm space, food and social interaction.

Two thousand 'Warm Boxes' packed with useful items such as tea bags and blankets to help the most vulnerable keep comfortable throughout the winter were also distributed free to people receiving homecare support in Inverclyde. In addition, the McLean Museum and Art Gallery, the Watt Library and Inverclyde Archives are also offering free admission.

Source: Audit Scotland using information from Inverclyde Council

Moray Council set up an online hub to provide information on services available to assist during the cost-of-living crisis

The council's online hub provides information via a one stop shop of services available to assist council residents with money worries, business support, energy saving, waste reduction, the location of warm hubs, cost of living scams and more including links for those wishing to volunteer their time to help. To mitigate digital exclusion posters were placed around Moray to advertise these services for those with limited digital access.

Source: Audit Scotland using information from Moray Council

Angus Council worked with their community planning partnership and third sector partners on a roadshow that toured the council area offering help with the cost-of-living crisis

Angus Council have set up a webpage for cost-of-living support alongside a cost-of-living roadshow which took place on two dates within the council area and was open to everyone, offering help with the cost of living. This support included representatives from Welfare Rights, Housing, Revenues and Benefits, Skills team, Citizens Advice and others. Tea, coffee and soup provided by Community café volunteers was available and there were also cooking on a budget demonstrations where grab-a-bags of cooking ingredients and slow cookers were given out for free to support affordable cooking methods with follow up communication (phone call and/or email) to ensure that these families have the support and resources they need to tackle their cost-of-living issues.

Partners have reported the positive impact of networking at the event, improved referral pathways at a local and national level. An evaluation of impact and uptake of services is being sent out and this data will be used to inform future provision.

Source: Audit Scotland using information from Angus Council

Aberdeen City Council set up an anti-poverty and inequality committee

The committee was set up to determine steps the city can take to better help key groups such as children, disabled people, women, people from black and ethnic minority communities, and those of pensionable age. Several external advisers have been appointed to the committee and the views of those with lived experience will also be sought as they consider in-work poverty, youth employability, community food provision and energy costs.

The committee have had two meetings so far. These included reports for discussion from the external advisors outlining key issues for the committee to focus on and reports from council managers and directors on poverty and inequalities related issues within Aberdeen allowing them to instruct and identify relevant actions for council teams, managers and senior managers to take.

The expected benefits of the new committee include enabling elected members to scrutinise issues more thoroughly by centralising all poverty and inequalities information, gain a better understanding the issues by engaging with external advisers and those with lived experience and identify actions for the council to take tackle poverty and inequalities.

Source: Audit Scotland using information from Aberdeen City Council

Glasgow City Council's data driven approach to support vulnerable communities

Last year we reported on the council's innovative approach of using administrative data to identify and target resources at the most vulnerable communities during the pandemic. The council has continued this approach to target resources at those most affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

For instance, the council distributed Scotland Loves Local Glasgow gift cards worth £105 to just under 85,000 to households who receive council tax reductions. The gift cards can be spent in over 950 businesses of all different sizes. The aim of this initiative was to help residents with increases in the prices of household essentials and encourage people to support businesses on their local high street.

Another example of using data to target the most vulnerable would be the council's focus on reducing pensioner poverty across the city by providing an income maximisation service to clients over the age of eighty who have been identified as potentially being eligible for Attendance Allowance and other benefits. Since the project commenced, 1,866 clients have been contacted by the service and £2,886,669 of financial gains have been secured on behalf of clients.

Source: Audit Scotland using information from Glasgow City Council

Urban Big Data Centre worked with North Lanarkshire Council to assess and better understand the impact service cuts to environmental services had on communities

Research undertaken by the Urban Big Data Centre – Unequal and Gendered – reveals that despite the best efforts of North Lanarkshire Council and despite its commitment to tackling inequalities, ten years of austerity cuts to environmental services were felt most acutely by women living in poorer neighbourhoods.

The research used North Lanarkshire council data to reveal the invisible 'third shift' done by women from poorer neighbourhoods in requests for environmental services while maintaining their homes, streets and neighbourhoods through council services.

The research showed that cuts to the council's environmental services created an increased demand for top-up, reactive, environmental services in all neighbourhoods in North Lanarkshire. Workforce cuts impacted the council's capacity to respond quickly to such requests – responses tended to be dealt with within a single day back in 2010 before austerity.

The council's CRM database is a rich resource that can be explored to reveal small but important differential impacts of budget cuts; on people living in more disadvantaged neighbourhoods and women in particular. By making women visible in the data, they have revealed a third working shift undertaken disproportionately by such women – work previously done routinely by council employees, funded from collective taxation.

Source: [Urban Big Data Centre Report on the Invisible Third Shift](#)

East Renfrewshire Council takes a data driven approach to reducing inequalities

Since the onset of the pandemic East Renfrewshire Council has been developing the tools and skills needed to bring in data from local services and national open sources and create timely and accessible analyses of the impact on health, social and economic metrics. Breakdown by communities of place and of interest is incorporated where this is viable on technical and privacy bases. Data reports and briefings are routinely shared to support decision making and are iterated to meet evolving information requirements of the council's Corporate Management Team.

The council also has recently commissioned qualitative research with community and business partners for insight into recovery priorities and has a complementary piece of work which utilises public, council and banking datasets to model and analyse the increasing cost of living impact on different household types. This will be a key source of evidence for guiding service and policy decisions in the coming months.

Source: Audit Scotland dataset using information from East Renfrewshire Council

Aberdeenshire Council carried out community impact assessments to better understand the impact of the pandemic and to inform recovery work

In September 2020 and 2021, Aberdeenshire Council completed community impact assessments (CIA) to develop a better understanding of how the community and statutory partners can work towards recovery following the pandemic. The assessments focused on how Covid-19 had affected lives, businesses, and communities as well as the council's response. The CIA was conducted via an online survey which generated 1,500 responses and ward meetings where 174 groups and organisations attended events across the authority area to gather sufficient feedback. There was a particular focus on collecting data from harder to reach groups such as the Lived Experience Group and the drugs and alcohol recovery community online forum.

The outcome from the CIAs supported the development of the council's priorities and was made available to all services for consideration in their business planning processes.

In 2022, the council conducted its 2022/23 strategic assessment to inform the development of the council's priorities and council plan. The assessment provided a comprehensive picture of the issues affecting Aberdeenshire under the headings of our people, our environment, and our economy.

Source: Audit Scotland dataset using information from Aberdeenshire Council

Stirling Council are focused on a co-design approach as they redesign services to meet their long-term vision

Stirling Council have created the 'Thriving Stirling Strategy' which will be implemented across a ten-year period from 2020 to 2030. The strategy outlines the council's long-term vision and the level of transformation that will be required to address the challenges currently faced.

Stirling Council are committed to redesigning all the services they provide through a co-design approach where the needs of local communities will be a top priority in creating the most efficient services that will be delivered at a time and in a way that suits the council's citizens.

Stirling Council are also currently working on a Community Wealth building approach which aims to focus on creating a fairer economy through empowering communities. The council have identified priority areas to enhance community engagement and improve the influence of community on council services. For instance, when the council were considering the sale of a local site in the East Area, they held consultations with local communities during the selling process. Through a series of community events, focus groups and an online survey the council gathered the views of over 600 citizens on what they think the land should be used for. Three community representatives were also elected to be involved in the bid evaluation process where they worked alongside elected members and council officers. Based on the opinions of local communities, a site Masterplan was created alongside a brief outlining the requirements of the development. Communities considered job creation and opportunities for local people to be a top priority of the new development and as a result, subsequent bids from developers included apprenticeship training places for local young people.

Source: Audit Scotland using information from Stirling Council including their Annual Accounts 2021/22
