Happy birthday!

Kirriemuir celebrates 150 years since the birth of JM Barrie

Hidden gem

Opening up the great outdoors to visitors and residents

Sharing the care

How the council is supporting foster carers

ALSO INSIDE>> CUSTOMER SURVEY ANGUS MUSEUMS EARLY YEARS INTERVENTION
JM Barrie, the creator of Peter Pan, was born in Kirriemuir 150 years ago and to this day, the burgh is proud of its association with the creator of one of literature’s best-loved characters.

Inside this edition of Angus Life, we outline how the council is marking the anniversary with a little piece of Neverland magic, and the plans of the local community to celebrate the occasion.

Kirriemuir is also known as the gateway to the Angus glens and we look at the work of a group of entrepreneurs who are spreading the word among outdoor enthusiasts on the opportunities on offer in this stunning part of Scotland.

As the council unveils a new training and pay structure scheme for foster carers, two foster carers speak to Angus Life about what the job means to them.

Nurturing our youngest citizens is also the subject of an in-depth look at the early years work being done in Angus to ensure the county’s children get the best possible start in life.

Last year, Angus residents were asked for their views on life in the county, and the finding of this citizens’ survey is the subject of a special feature.

One issue which affects all residents is the state of the economy and we highlight the work being done by a specialist business advice team to give local employers a boost.

Finally, the unstinting commitment of a dedicated band of volunteers to promote and enhance their local museum is highlighted in our special feature.
Changes to the planning system

THE most significant changes to Scottish planning law in decades came into force last year as part of a drive to modernise the system.

The aim of the new Planning Scotland Act is to ensure the planning system is more efficient and effective, serving the needs of both developers and local communities. Some of the key changes are:

Neighbour notification

The responsibility to notify neighbouring landowners about applications falls on planning authorities, rather than developers. Neighbours now have 21 days, rather than the previous 14, to raise concerns.

Local review bodies

Consisting of elected members and officials, these aim to help planning appeals for small developments move more swiftly through the system, rather than the matter having to be referred to ministers.

New schemes of delegation

These will result in fewer applications going through a lengthy committee procedure and allow speedier decision making.

Community consultation

Any plans for a national or major development require a consultation with local residents before the application is submitted. At least one public event must be held by the applicant and a report on the consultation must be submitted with the application.

Angus Council’s head of planning, George Chree, explained that in Angus all these key changes have now been implemented.

"The new planning system should help build a growing economy, but at the same time protect the Angus environment for future generations and make sure communities can enjoy a better quality of life,” he added.

To ensure the smooth transition to the new system, there has been strong emphasis on additional training in Angus, with all council members receiving training to familiarise themselves with the new planning arrangements and the responsibilities of elected members within the planning process.

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ANGUS SHORTS

Monifieth and Sidlaw

A FOLLOW-UP to the event held by the Monifieth and Sidlaw local community planning team to discuss how to improve perceptions of the Monifieth and Sidlaw area is to be held in spring.

A range of activities is currently going on in Monifieth and the event gave a chance to share information as well as exploring realistic new ideas for the area.

Monifieth in Bloom is planning projects which include beach clean-ups, spring clean-ups and planting and a promotional event.

For further information, contact the community planning team on 01241 803111 or visit www.angus.org.uk

Taking the plunge!

A FURTHER step was taken towards the new Montrose swimming pool in January when planning permission was granted by the council.

It is anticipated that the project will now go out to tender in July.

The pool will link to the existing Montrose Sports Centre in Marine Avenue. The main six-lane pool will be 25m long.

Next to it will be a viewing gallery and a 7m x 13m studio pool with a moving floor to allow variation in the pool depth, maximising use and flexibility.

The pools will accommodate tuition at all levels, competitive swimming and training, water polo and play activities for different age groups.

The £10m facility will also have a health suite with a sauna, steam room and relaxation area and improved fitness suite.

Scotland’s hidden gem

LOVERS of the great outdoors are truly blessed in Angus. From remote glens to rugged cliffs, those with a spirit of adventure will find excitement aplenty in this most diverse of counties.

The inspiring Angus landscape is enjoyed by both visitors and local people alike, and is one of the prime assets of the county.

From rock climbing and wild camping to cycling and abseiling, there is an extensive range of outdoor activities that appeal to all ages and interests in Angus.

To showcase the wide range of outdoor activities available in Angus, a group of business owners in the area decided to join forces two years ago to promote the county at home and further afield.

Supported by Angus Council, the Outdoor Angus group comprises a diverse mix of activity, equipment and accommodation providers, who all share an enduring and passionate interest in the great outdoors.

Janey Andrews, of outdoor specialists Glentrek and secretary of Outdoor Angus, said: “Angus is a fantastic destination for lovers of the outdoors and offers an incredible range of mountain,
ANGUS GLENS

Book your place at the annual walking festival

ONE of the biggest events in the outdoor Angus calendar is the Angus Glens Walking Festival.

For the first time, online booking is available for walkers to book and pay for the walks and evening events they’d like to attend during this year’s festival, which runs from 3 to 6 June.

In addition to e-booking facilities, the new, easy-to-use website contains lots of information about the popular festival and the beautiful Angus Glens.

This year, the festival will feature two new walks celebrating one of the best-known sons of Angus, JM Barrie, creator of Peter Pan.

To mark the 150th anniversary of the birth of JM Barrie (see right), local historian Sandra Affleck will lead a guided walk through the streets of Kirriemuir, which will include visits to Barrie’s birth place and the Camera Obscura.

JM Barrie’s links to Angus are also the focus of a walk around Glen Prosen village, where Barrie was a frequent visitor.

This walk will feature the fascinating stories of Barrie’s visits to Glen Prosen, including his meetings with his friend, the famous Antarctic explorer Captain Robert Falcon Scott, who stayed in the glen when preparing for his final expedition to the Antarctic.

The festival will also feature a new walk from Glen Tanar to Glen Esk via Mount Keen, which is aimed at experienced hillwalkers.

The festival includes another 21 guided walks, with walks to suit all ages and all levels of fitness and hillwalking experience.

For more information about the Angus Glens Walking Festival 2010, and to make a booking, visit www.angus.gov.uk.

The festival includes a food and drink industry programme which will take place in the park.

For more information contact VisitScotland Information Centre on 01382 527527.

Happy birthday, JM Barrie

PLANS to create a new play area in Kirriemuir which will take its inspiration from the magical tale of JM Barrie’s Peter Pan are taking shape.

As the “little red town” gears up to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of its most famous son, work has been progressing to create a fitting project to mark the event.

Planning permission for the ambitious project to redevelop Kirrie Hill was granted by the council earlier this year, and a funding package for the first phase of the project has also been unveiled.

This initial phase will include a new Neverland play area, a heritage and nature trail, new picnic tables and a new entrance feature to the park.

It is anticipated that work will start in early August with completion in October.

Meanwhile, the local community is also getting geared up to mark the anniversary of Barrie’s birth.

Proposed events in the Barrie 2010 celebrations in May and June include a birthday tribute lecture, a grand concert, an evening of music and song and drama workshops.

Project co-ordinator Lis Hill said: “The organisers anticipate that the programme will attract visitors from other parts of Scotland and beyond coming to Angus for at least one long weekend in May.

“Barrie 2010 will be good for Kirriemuir, good for Angus and especially good for local business.”

Check out the website for updates and information on where to reserve tickets at www.barrie2010.org.uk.

www.angus.gov.uk 05 ANGUSlife
A redesign of the fostering service means more support for those who offer a safe haven to vulnerable children

Sharing the care with foster families

When children are taken into care, because of abuse or neglect, or if their families break down due to illness, disability or other problems, the one thing that is vital to their wellbeing is a temporary home where they can feel safe, secure and cared for.

Foster carers provide such a haven for children by welcoming vulnerable children into their homes. They play a vital role in our communities as sadly more and more families each year reach crisis point.

In common with many authorities across the country, there is a shortage of foster carers in Angus for the children who need to be looked after away from home and a small band of loyal and exceptional fostering families in Angus currently accommodate a high number of children.

To tackle this problem, Angus Council is redesigning its fostering scheme to make it more attractive to new carers, while in turn creating a better trained and skilled network of foster carers.

The redesign includes the introduction of a new, more generous pay structure which it is hoped will attract more carers by making fostering financially viable for more people.

Robin Duncan, service manager for children’s services, explained: “We are fortunate in Angus to have a group of foster carers who have shown great commitment to the children they look after and a real willingness to go the extra mile when the children need it.

“However, the increasing numbers of children in care have made it increasingly hard to make sure we have enough carers for all the children who need placements.

“The redesign aims to make the package of support, training and financial remuneration on offer to carers as attractive as possible.

“Foster carers will tell you that the biggest rewards of fostering are to do with the children, not the money, but like other families, they have to pay their bills. Improving the financial package on offer has been an important part of ensuring that as many people as possible can consider fostering as a realistic option.”

Under the scheme, foster carers across Angus will be paid a carer allowance for themselves and a child allowance to cover the cost of looking after the child. Carers will be placed on one of three levels based on a number of components including experience and skills.

The level of payment carers will get will depend on the number and age of the children they are approved for and whether they are a level 1, 2 or 3 carer. As an illustration, taking all the allowances together, a carer approved to take two children aged eight and 13 will receive the following:

- Level 1 carer: up to £30,000pa
- Level 2 carer: up to £33,000pa
- Level 3 carer: up to £40,000pa

For more information visit www.fosteringandadoption.angus.gov.uk or contact Linda Rodger or any other member of the fostering team on 01241 435078.

Jill Whyte has opened up her home to offer a warm and welcoming environment for children in need of extra support
FOSTERING was always something Jill Whyte of Forfar wanted to do and when her youngest child reached six, she decided to put her plans into action.

Jill and her husband Russell have now been fostering for five years, and she said: “Like everything else in life, there are good points and bad points to being a foster carer, but what people have to remember is that they are not superhuman.

“There is lots of support available from the fostering team at the council and if things get tough, it’s important to ask for help.”

Jill feels that the new system of payment will benefit foster carers and make it more financially viable for people to become foster carers.

“The new system will give foster carers more recognition for the professional job that they do,” she added.

She also welcomes the introduction of a more structured training scheme: “I really enjoy the training as it gives you a chance to meet other foster carers, and to learn new skills which will help you in your fostering role.”

Finally, Jill would urge anyone thinking about becoming a foster carer to get in touch with the foster team.

“There’s no point in putting it off and 20 years down the line regretting never having pursued it. There’s lots of information available to help you decide if fostering is right for you.”

Susan, who has two children of her own, said: “I think anyone would want to step in if children from their family were taken into care.

“Although this was probably a more unusual route into foster caring, I had to go through the same assessment process as anyone else.

“After looking after my relative’s children for a few years, I received an emergency request from the council’s foster team to ask if I could take some more children and from then on I was hooked.

“The most positive thing about being a foster carer is to see the change in children who come through your door with no colour in their cheeks, and see how quickly they respond to you and watch as they blossom.

That is what makes fostering so fulfilling for me.”

Although initially sceptical about the proposed changes to the fostering service in Angus, having studied the detail of what has been proposed, Susan feels that it is “very fair across the board”.

“With the new system, carers will have a guaranteed income and this will bring financial security knowing what your wage is to be.

“Also, with the new system being skills related, hopefully carers will be treated as professionals,” she added.

“The name of the foster carer has been changed to ensure anonymity.  

www.angus.gov.uk 07 ANGUSlife
In a recent survey of Angus citizens, 93 per cent of people expressed their satisfaction with the quality of life in the county.

The survey of 1500 residents from across the county was commissioned by Angus Council and gave residents the opportunity to give their views on their neighbourhoods as well as the services provided by the council and other community planning partners, including health, police and fire services.

The survey also revealed that residents are particularly positive about their neighbourhoods and the environment as well as the ease of access to facilities and services.

Giving a fascinating glimpse into the lives of Angus people, the survey revealed that half of the respondents had lived in their neighbourhood for more than 10 years, with 20 per cent stating they had always lived in their neighbourhood.

More than half of those surveyed owned their own homes, with the second-largest portion being rented from the council or housing association.

While a relatively small number of respondents (11 per cent) undertook work on an unpaid basis, 98 per cent said that volunteering was a positive experience.

Sixty-nine per cent of residents said they were in good or very good health, and 50 per cent felt optimistic about the future.

When asked about their qualifications, 4 per cent of those surveyed had a degree, with the majority stating that their highest qualification was O-grade, standard grade, GCSE, CSE, senior certificate or equivalent (17 per cent). A third of respondents said they did not have any of the qualifications under consideration.

Of those surveyed, 31 per cent were retired and 29 per cent in full-time employment, 13 per cent in part-time employment, 3 per cent caring for children, 3 per cent were students and 2 per cent were unemployed.

On the financial front, 93 per cent possessed a bank or building society account, while 87 per cent had insurance for home contents. Some 78 per cent said they would be able to get hold of £500 at short notice.

On the health front, more than two-thirds of respondents described their overall health as being good or very good. 51 per cent undertook moderate physical activity five days a week or more, and 24 per cent ate the recommended five or more portions of fruit and vegetables on the day before they were interviewed.

Almost all the respondents were registered with a doctor (99 per cent), and 73 per cent with a dentist. The survey also revealed that 36 per cent of respondents were smokers and 23 per cent were previous smokers.

The full findings are available online at www.angus.gov.uk/citizensurvey

The council
Residents expressed high levels of satisfaction with council services, agreeing that:

• the council has friendly, polite and well-informed employees
• provides good-quality services
• provides an efficient service.

There were also high levels of satisfaction with the response from the council to requests for information and services; however, some were less positive about the council’s response to complaints.

Council chief executive David Sawers said: “It is good to receive such positive feedback about the council from the public. All of the findings are useful as they will help to inform the development of the services that we and our community planning partners plan and deliver together.

“I would like to thank all those residents who took the time to participate in the survey – their input will prove invaluable in determining how we can build on the positive feedback, while working to tackle those areas where people had concerns.”

Influencing what happens in your neighbourhood
Although 11 per cent of people thought they had influence over decisions that affected their neighbourhoods, four out of five of those interviewed said they felt they have little or no influence.

There are a number of ways to influence what happens in your neighbourhood, including:

• Attending meetings and events
• Writing to council members
• Contacting the council directly
• Joining a community group

It is important to get involved and make your voice heard to ensure your views are considered in decisions that affect your area.

>>It is good to receive such positive feedback about the council from the public. The findings will help to inform the development of the services that we deliver

David Sawers, Angus Council chief executive

We love Angus! That’s the message that came out of a recent council survey which revealed residents enjoy a good quality of life.
citizens can play an active part in the development of their local communities. Residents can influence activities in their local area by getting involved with their local community planning partnership or community councils.

People can respond to both local and national consultations which are available to the public for comment. These can be found at www.angus.gov.uk/hys. The Angus Citizens’ Panel also plays an important role in reflecting the views of the people of Angus on services, information and activities in the area.

If you would like more information on becoming a member of the panel, please contact the senior community planning officer on 01307 476128.

Comments about how services could be improved can be given by emailing accessline@angus.gov.uk, or by calling ACCESSLine, the council’s direct line for council services, on 08452 777 778. Alternatively, use the online compliments, comments and complaints form on the council’s website.

More information on how you can influence your local area can be found on the Angus Community Planning Website at www.angus.org, or by contacting community planning on 01307 476128.

Neighbourhoods

Although the majority of those surveyed thought their neighbourhood was quiet and peaceful, with friendly people and neighbours, there were concerns expressed about drug problems and antisocial behaviour in certain communities. This finding will now be taken forward by the Angus Community Safety Partnership, which draws its members from Angus Council, Tayside Police and Tayside Fire and Rescue.

It will be the subject of a special feature in a future edition of Angus Life.

The many attractions of Angus have prompted residents to say they enjoy a high quality of living.

BRECHIN has been successful in gaining town centre regeneration money from the Scottish Government which is aimed at developing commercial and residential property in the area. Developments are also ongoing under the Townscape Heritage Initiative.

A Fairtrade Steering group has been set up in Brechin which has been making progress towards achieving Fairtrade status for the burgh.

The Salvation Army has donated a pool table to the community flat at Hillside and work is ongoing to promote the use of the flat for the benefit of the community.

For more information, contact the local community planning team on 01356 666114 or visit www.angus.org.uk

THE Carnoustie and District Local Community Planning Team is currently working with the Three Streets Residents Association to enable them to organise and promote a community safety event in spring.

A community appraisal has also taken in part of the west end of Carnoustie to work with the local community to look at patterns of community activity, to identify gaps in provision of services and facilities in the area and to address and meet local needs.

A local community planning partnership for Carnoustie has been re-established. The partnership – known as Carnoustie Forward – is currently working towards progressing a range of identified short, medium and long-term projects.

For further information, contact the local community planning team on 01241 803111, or visit www.angus.org.uk
A specialist team of council advisers is offering vital support to local companies to beat the effects of the recession.

The recession may be officially over, but the effects of the downturn continue to be felt by businesses as competition for capital, markets and customers remains tough. To secure and safeguard jobs in Angus and ensure that the local economy remains robust, a specialist business advice team established by Angus Council is offering businesses in the county a helping hand.

The dedicated team of business advisers offers a one-to-one guidance and counselling service on a range of subjects, including training, marketing, exporting and grants and loans. The business advisers, based within the council’s economic development unit, all have extensive commercial experience in the private sector including experience of running their own businesses and are fully qualified business advice practitioners.

Working from the Enterprise Centre in Brechin Business Park, the team of four advisers was established at the start of last year and within their first 12 months, they offered support and advice to 122 local companies. This enabled local businesses to access more than £35,000 of public sector investment, which has allowed a further £91,000 of private investment to be levered in, leading to the creation of nine new jobs and safeguarding another 117 posts.

The scheme was established by the council to aid small businesses by offering up to 30 per cent of project costs, up to a maximum value of £5000.

David Cowley, managing director of Strathmore Woollens, said: “The grant assistance allows us to profile our fabrics to a high standard. Strathmore’s products have a strong affinity with the area and the company empathises with the aims of the council in spreading the good name of Angus throughout the world.”

Roy Johnston of the business advice team proved extremely helpful and we have an excellent ongoing relationship with him. “I would encourage any local business looking for advice or assistance to approach the team; it has certainly been a worthwhile exercise for Strathmore Woollens.”

Case Studies

STRATHMORE Woollen Company Ltd received £3821 from the Angus Grant Scheme towards a £12,739 project to produce 60 sets of high-quality fabric swatch books, or bunches, which are distributed to their major customers all across the world. These are a key selling tool for the company, and will provide a boost to Strathmore and its 10 full-time staff based in North Street, Forfar.

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We’re digging deep to repair Angus roads

ANGUS residents will know that this winter’s big freeze has taken its toll on the county’s roads and footways. They will also remember the widespread flooding across the area last autumn.

Recognising the importance of the roads network to the future of communities and the local economy, the council has committed an additional £1 million in its 2010/11 budget to deal with roads and footway repairs and renewals.

Along with the allocation of a further £1m, the total investment in the county’s roads network now stands at a record £14m for the coming year.

Jeff Green, the council’s head of roads, said: “This additional investment will now allow the roads division to undertake a programme of works across the county to tackle the damage left after the winter.

“Understanding the importance of the roads network to the future of communities and the local economy, the council has committed an additional £1 million in its 2010/11 budget to deal with roads and footway repairs and renewals.

Along with the allocation of a further £1m, the total investment in the county’s roads network now stands at a record £14m for the coming year.

The allocation will also enable a variety of essential repairs to roads, footpaths, bridges and other road structures to be undertaken, as well as allowing continuing investment in public transport infrastructure and facilities for pedestrians.

This funding will also allow some of the flooding issues which were evident in autumn to be addressed.

Jeff added: “A safe and efficient network is vital to allow people and goods to move through the council area and this level of investment by the council in the vital infrastructure will allow this to continue.”

Brechin THI works

TWO major building repair projects are under way in Brechin to renovate the Dalhousie Bar buildings and the Cathedral Hall with part funding from the Townscape Heritage Initiative.

The repairs at the Dalhousie Bar building will include an overhaul of all gutters, the roof, repairs to the stonework, and eradication of wet and dry rot. Work at Cathedral Hall will consist of repairs to stonework repairs, gutters, downpipes and roof. This project is scheduled for completion in mid-April while the Dalhousie Bar project is due to finish at the end of July.

Angus Council has made it even easier for residents to manage their council tax payments.

A new paperless system means people can arrange to pay their bill by direct debit by simply making a phone call. About 60 per cent of Angus residents use direct debit to pay their council tax, and it is hoped that this new method will encourage even more to sign up.

Contact the revenues service on 01382 536500. Have your bank details and, if possible, council tax account number to hand.

The future of forestry

A PUBLIC meeting has been organised to let Angus people give their views on woodlands and forestry in the county.

Angus Council and Forestry Commission Scotland are producing a Woodland and Forestry Framework.

The meeting, on 1 April in The Royal Hotel, Forfar, will enable people to give their views on how they feel the woodlands should look and how we should make the most of them.

To book a place, call 0845 226 2890 or email anguswoods@ruraldevelopment.org.uk

www.angus.gov.uk
Our museums can inspire understanding and appreciation of our cultural values, heritage and environment, using collections to tell our story and prepare us for the future.

In Angus, the life and times of generations of local people and their communities are brought alive in the county’s museums. With their collections of rare and fascinating artefacts, our museums both educate and inspire, contributing to the cultural wellbeing of the community and benefiting the local economy.

To ensure that local museums remain a vibrant part of their local communities, and continue to play a vital role on boosting tourism in the county, Angus Council recently carried out a comprehensive review of its museums and unveiled plans for the future improvement of the service.

Among the recommendations contained in the review were the establishment of stronger links with the existing museum volunteer groups and the introduction of a museum volunteer policy.

The review also looked at such areas as community outreach, heritage tourism, display refurbishment, and the establishment of a collections unit.

Norman Atkinson, senior service manager cultural services, said: “We are proud of our links with the communities in Angus, who support our museums with donations of local interest and who regard their local museum as the place to explore the story of their burgh.”

“We are always looking for improvement, however, and this comprehensive review looks at ways in which we can strengthen these community links and involve more people with the day to day work of our museums. "Museums can also contribute to the local economy through heritage tourism by attracting more visitors to Angus. We must constantly update our museum displays to encourage new and repeat visitors, as well as building in new ways of making our collections accessible.

"Working with our friends and volunteers helps us achieve these goals.”
FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUMS

There are currently three “friends” groups in Angus who provide invaluable support to their local museums.

The Friends of Kirriemuir

The Friends of Kirriemuir Gateway to the Glens Museum recently worked in partnership with Angus Council to produce a major exhibition on renowned geologist Sir Charles Lyell – one of the most significant figures ever born in Angus. Secretary David Orr said that the friends were proud to have initiated this important new exhibition.

“This is the latest example of our co-operation with Angus Council and it seems this will become a regular approach with the announcement that the council is recommending stronger links with existing museum volunteer groups,” added David.

“The friends hope this exhibition will provide worldwide interest in the museum and awaken the tremendous legacy that Sir Charles Lyell has left for the future generations.

“We are fortunate here in Kirriemuir that we have a membership of more than 100 talented and knowledgeable local people to assist us in our varied projects and invite the public to visit the free display and increase their knowledge of local geology as well as to join us in future projects by becoming a friend of the museum.”

Anyone interested in joining the Kirriemuir friends can pick up an application form at the museum.

The friends of Brechin

The friends of Brechin Town House Museum are eagerly anticipating the reopening of the museum after a major restoration project undertaken as part of the Brechin Townscape Heritage Initiative.

Brian Mitchell, secretary, said: “We are a charitable organisation created to promote an interest in, and an appreciation of, local history particularly as recorded and held in artefacts within the museum.

“Members have supported and assisted museum staff in exhibitions and, for example, recently volunteered their services in guiding members of the public through the recently refurbished town house.

“The friends promote the arts by arranging talks, holding an annual clay modelling competition for youngsters, and tours of the historic close off Montrose High Street, concluding in Trades Close at the William Lamb Studio.

“Help with fundraising is most welcome and money raised is used to improve the visitor’s experience at the studio. Recently, new lighting has been installed with some financial help from the friends.”

For further information, contact Anne on 01674 673684.

The Friends of the William Lamb Studio also welcomes the interest and support of all volunteers.

“Our primary objective is to promote the work of William Lamb and with staffing the studio when required, especially during the period of summer opening,” said secretary Anne Wyllie.

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Disability Forum

ANGUS Council leads a Disability Forum which includes individuals with disabilities, employees of the council, and organisations representing people with disabilities.

The forum, which meets about five times a year, is looking for new members.

If you would like to contribute to the development of council services for people with disabilities, contact Doreen Phillips, equalities officer on 01307 476058 (Typetalk available via the ACCESSLine 08452 777 778), or email phillipsd@angus.gov.uk

Forfar area

THE use of social networking to engage with young people is being explored by the Forfar and District community planning team.

The team is also involved in discussions with tenants’ groups and the Forfar and Area Partnership regarding a proposed community information event for the town.

For more information, contact the local community planning team on 01575 576941, or visit www.angus.org.uk

Kirriemuir and Dean

THE Kirriemuir and Dean local community planning team is working on a number of projects and initiatives in the area.

These include the development of a Kirriemuir calendar of events. The team is also investigating options for the development of a community garden in Kirriemuir. Initial discussions within the council and with local groups who may be interested in this proposed development have taken place.

Contact the community planning team on 01575 576941, or visit www.angus.org.uk
FEATURE
EARLY YEARS

Flushed with success

THE high standards at the council’s toilet facilities have been recognised at the British Toilet Association awards. Angus scooped the National Winner for Scotland for Baby Changing Facilities for the Harbour Visitor Centre, Arbroath; 5-star Loo of the Year awards for the superloos at the Harbour Visitor Centre and Market Place, both Arbroath, and Baltic Street, Montrose; and 4-star Loo of the Year awards at Reform Street, Kirriemuir, Buttermarket, Forfar and Church Street, Brechin. Staff at all facilities have received an Attendant of the Year award.

Cutting carbon

ANGUS Council has received a 2010 Carbon Trust Low Carbon Building Award for Seaview Primary School in Monifieth. The award aims to raise awareness of the carbon savings opportunities which exist within the building sector.

The council has also achieved Carbon Trust accreditation, evidence that it is making progress in reducing its carbon footprint. To achieve the accreditation, the council had to demonstrate carbon reduction and show it had good carbon management practices in place.

Cliffburn regeneration

THE final phase of the Cliffburn regeneration project in Arbroath is under way.

The project will involve the demolition of the hard-to-let flats in Mayfield Terrace, re-roofing of the privately owned shop units, and improvements to the surroundings of these properties, forming an improved commercial hub and gateway project for the residents.

During the project, which will finish in early summer, the shops will be open for business as usual.

Shaping the citizens of tomorrow

Professionals in Angus are working together to help our youngest residents reach their full potential by supporting them and their families

THE first three years are recognised as being crucial to a child’s development and in Angus, innovative work is taking place to ensure that our youngest citizens and their families are supported and nurtured.

In 2008, an Early Years Framework was launched by the Scottish Government and COSLA, setting out policy direction for the next decade and highlighting the importance of a positive start in life.

Specific responsibility for implementation of the framework in Angus lies with the early years and childcare joint action group, comprising a range of professionals from across children’s services.

Clear and positive action, improved outcomes for the early years and the importance of community planning partners working together to provide high-quality services to support young children and their families are at the heart of the Angus vision.

This work aims to improve the life chances of all Angus children and tackle inequalities, focusing on working with local communities, supporting positive parenting, working in family homes and liaising with nurseries and schools.

Within the early years, initiatives can range from intensive one-to-one work with individual families, to projects within schools, nurseries and playgroups which give children the opportunity to learn through fun (see Abbey Playgroup opposite).

Eileen Jackson, who chairs the group, said: “Children and young people are valued members of our community. They are unique individuals who can make important contributions to family and community life.

“As the citizens of tomorrow, they should have the best start in life and be assisted, where required, to reach their full potential as they enjoy growing up in Angus.

“It is therefore crucial that the profile of the importance of the early years of a child’s life is raised.

“There is a clear desire in Angus to see investment in the early years, with a focus on building on successes to date and on reducing the costs of failure.

“It is everyone’s responsibility to progress this agenda. The early years’ workforce plays a huge part in this whether working in a playgroup, private nursery, out-of-school care club or as a childminder.

“However, we must strengthen our partnerships to deliver positive outcomes for the children and young people of Angus. The framework is a key driver to enable this to happen.”

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Growing interest in the environment

GREEN-FINGERED tots at the Abbey playgroup in Arbroath are learning at an early age all about the importance of healthy eating and caring for the environment thanks to a partnership with a local organic garden.

The HOPE Trust, which runs an organic garden in the grounds of Hospitalfield House in Arbroath, has donated a plot for the children to grow fruit and veg.

And as spring approaches, everyone at the playgroup is looking forward to getting their hands dirty and producing their own organic produce.

The project has been so successful in capturing the imagination of the children and their families that they collected 4000 Let’s Grow vouchers from Morrison’s supermarket to help pay for gardening equipment.

They also won a top prize of a digital camera and a soil box to plant up with the possibility of it being chosen for display at the Chelsea Flower Show in May.

Shirley Tevioldale of the playgroup said: “Our thanks go to the HOPE Trust for its generous donation and to Angus Council for its support with training and healthy eating.

“We hope that by encouraging healthy eating at a young age, we will instill good habits which will last a lifetime.

“The children will also learn how things grow and about the environment while having lots of fun at the same time.”

If you can donate items for the playgroup’s plot, please call Shirley on 07960 352805.

Help to promote positive behaviour

EACH school cluster has a designated early years worker who works in partnership with schools, parents and carers.

The workers support children and their families in nursery and primary one in areas such as promoting positive behaviour, preparing children for school and child development.

A number of approaches and methods are used by the early years workers in the home and at school. These include learning through play; Circle Time – a technique where a group sit together for an activity involving everyone; and family work, which looks at routines, consistency and boundaries to help parents develop strategies to cope with challenges.

Parents who have been involved in the service said:

“Hearing the opinions of an objective person concerning my child was very useful. I also felt supported.”

“The worker was kind and caring. I don’t know what we would have done without her.”

“I have managed to be in control of my son and enjoy him more thanks to the worker’s help.”

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COUNCILLORS

Council members

1 KIRRIEMUIR & DEAN
Alison Andrews (LIB DEM),
Milton House,
Milton of Finavon,
By Forfar DD8 3PY
Tel: (H) 01307 850275
Email: alisonandrews@angus.gov.uk

Ian Macintosh (CON),
46 Prior Road,
Forfar DD8 3DT
Tel: (H) 01307 817932
Email: id_pl_03@snowman.org

2 BRECHIN & EDZELL
Mairi Evans (SNP),
11 Eastbank,
Brechin DD9 6AT
Tel: 07500 101724
Email: members@angus.gov.uk

3 FORFAR & DISTRICT
Colin Brown (IND),
Lilybank Farmhouse,
Lilybank Road,
Forfar DD8 2HZ
Tel: (H) 01307 818233
Email: colinbrown@angus.gov.uk

4 MONIFIETH & SIDLAW
Bill Middleditch (SNP),
92 Grangefield Drive,
Monifieth DD5 4ES
Tel: (H) 01382 533946
Email: billmiddleditch@angus.gov.uk

5 CARNOUTIE & DISTRICT
HeLEN ONSWALD (SNP),
20 Francesteet,
Camourse DD7 6SJ
Tel: 01241 830307
Email: chonswald@angus.gov.uk

6 ABROATH WEST & LETHAM
Alex King (SNP),
12 Dalhousie Place,
Abroath DD11 2BT
Tel: (H) 01241 847162
Email: alexking@angus.gov.uk

7 ABROATH EAST & LUNAN
Jim Miller (CON),
26B East Abbey Street,
Arbroath, DD11 1EN
Tel: (H) 01241 873763
Email: jim@miller@angus.gov.uk

8 MONTROSE & DISTRICT
David May (LIB DEM),
Evasion, Lamondfauld Lane,
Hillside,
Montrose DD10 9HX
Tel: 01674 630073
Email: davidm@angus.gov.uk

Further details can be found at www.angus.gov.uk

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