And... action!
The stage is set at the new-look Webster Theatre
Welcome to the Spring 2008 edition of *Angus Life* – the council’s magazine for the residents of Angus. It’s been an eventful four months since the last edition. The Webster Theatre has reopened following a multi-million pound revamp, the first phase of the work to create first-class new schools in Forfar and Carnoustie is complete, and a surge in the county’s industrial and commercial property market is helping boost the local economy.

These success stories benefit us all and the council and its partners are building on that success, working together more and more to plan and deliver better public services across the board.

In this special 20-page edition, you’ll find some great illustrations of how this partnership approach is really making a difference to the delivery of more effective and efficient services to Angus citizens.

Among those partners working with the council are the voluntary sector and NHS Tayside and we take a closer look at some of the groundbreaking work on these fronts happening across the county.

The council recently set out its five-year vision for Angus, and throughout the magazine we feature some exciting initiatives which highlight the council’s ambitions for the county.

More detailed news of what’s planned and also how the council performed during the past year will be featured in Putting You First, which will be coming through your letterbox in June.

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A SERIES of multicultural events are being planned throughout Angus in August. Angus Council’s equalities team want to hear from people who have a traditional skill, talent or hobby, and who would like to volunteer to run a session of one or two hours.

The fun sessions will be tasters of different cultures and can be as varied as Scottish storytelling to Chinese dancing, origami to belly dancing.

People from different countries who would be prepared to go into schools and talk to pupils about what it’s like to live in their homeland are also being sought.

Please contact Doreen Phillips, email phillipsd@angus.gov.uk or phone 01307 476058.

*Angus Life* is produced using recycled paper. When you have finished with this magazine, please recycle it.
A credit union for the people by the people

FOR the first time, anyone who lives or works in Angus can benefit from a credit union which offers convenient savings and low-interest loans to its members.

Angus Credit Union is a co-operative owned by its members, which helps instil the virtue of saving money, which in turn loaned out to members at affordable rates with no hidden charges.

The beauty of the credit union is that members can save as often as they like with as little or as much they feel they can afford.

Once people get into the habit of putting something away on a weekly or monthly basis, they will then see even small amounts adding up.

The small amount of interest gained from loans helps pay for the running of the credit union and any surplus is returned to the members each year in the form of a dividend on savings.

Angus Credit Union’s development manager Ewen Allardyce is in no doubt that the credit union will benefit the whole of Angus.

“Local money staying in the local economy is what it’s all about, giving many Angus citizens the chance to get the right balance between saving and borrowing,” he said.

A credit union is based on a common bond meaning that anyone who lives or works in Angus may be a member.

In true partnership working, the credit union and the council have agreed that members can pay in their savings via ACCESS offices.

For application forms and further information, visit the credit union office within the Volunteer Centre Angus, Guthrie Port, Arbroath, the main office at 11 Castle Street, Forfar, local ACCESS offices or www.anguscreditunion.co.uk

>>See our money advice feature for more on managing your finances

Turning East for feedback

ANGUS Council is trying to improve its services for people coming from Eastern Europe to live and work in the county.

To establish the best way of delivering services to the people in these different communities, the council is urging anyone from Eastern Europe who is currently living and working in Angus to complete a short questionnaire.

The questionnaire can be found on the council’s website at www.angus.gov.uk/hys/migrantworkers

Or call Doreen Phillips, equalities officer, on 01307 476058 for a copy.

A presentation of the results of the Monifieth health and wellbeing questionnaire was given at the partnership meeting in February and this meeting also discussed the future of the partnership with a view to identifying new priorities for the town.

Further information can also be found on the community planning website at www.angus.org.uk

Monifieth area plan is flowering

THE Monifieth Area Partnership has been asked to look at current priorities and new priorities for the future of the burgh.

As part of the priority to enhance the town centre, the environmental improvement group is working in partnership with Monifieth High School with a view to enhancing the square with planters of flowers grown in the school’s polytunnels.

Further information can also be found on the community planning website at www.angus.org.uk

www.angus.gov.uk 03 ANGUSlife
Thousandsof people give their time in Angus to help others – proving that co-operation, trust and community strength are very much alive and kicking in the county.

As one of the most popular places in Scotland for volunteering, 32 per cent of Angus citizens engage in thousands of different volunteer activities – a contribution with an estimated value of £30 million.

For the little invested in volunteering, the returns are huge in the impact it has on the lives of so many people, on how it supports vital services, and in making a difference in the lives of the volunteers themselves.

The strength of volunteering in Angus is sustained by the enthusiasm and efforts of the Volunteer Centre Angus, which encourages people who want to get involved in volunteering, and helps them find the best volunteering opportunity to suit them.

The centre’s successful promotion of volunteering as a means of achieving personal and community development, bringing national recognition to Angus and a dramatic increase in volunteering in the county, led to it winning the Community Ambassador category at the prestigious Angus Ambassador Awards in 2007.

Centre manager Gary Malone was delighted that the work of the centre, and the thousands of people in Angus who offer their time through volunteering, was

CASE STUDY

FIONA WALSH
Young volunteer

VOLUNTEERING has been a turning point in my life. Determined to deal with drug addiction and move my life on, I visited the Volunteer Centre and became involved in a project aimed at helping young people make a difference in their communities by doing practical tasks.

Through volunteering, I gained confidence and found work, and felt proud of my achievements. It really transformed my life. I am now volunteering doing administration, marketing and development work and thoroughly enjoying the experience. Volunteering has taken me beyond Angus to Bulgaria, where I helped children suffering dire poverty and disadvantage.

I would highly recommend volunteering to anyone who is feeling isolated and alone and not sure what to do with their life. It’s a great opportunity to learn new skills, meet new people and to overcome barriers. It’s also a great sense of achievement when you have done something worthwhile and helped others.

My experience in being supported into volunteering has helped me value the difference anyone could make, but most of all, I wanted to use the experience to help make sure young people are aware of the tragedy of drug addiction and how badly it can affect you. One day I want to be a youth worker and what I’m doing now will help me on my way.

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I am also involved with HOPE Trust. This is a project training people in organic gardening. My wife and I grow our own organic produce, so I thoroughly enjoy my involvement in this project.

As a distributor for olive oil from Palestine and the surrounding area, I have visited Palestine and worked with olive farmers there. I get great satisfaction from volunteering, not just for myself, but for the individuals I have supported, helping them feel better about themselves, the environment, planting trees – and making a footprint on history!
A unique internet service is making more and more of the county available for people who have disabilities.

**Access all areas**

Whether it's a visit to the shops, an evening out to a restaurant, or an appointment at the bank, planning ahead is vital for people with disabilities.

Thanks to the launch of an easy to use website, disabled people in Angus now have information that enables them to get out and about in the county – at the click of a mouse.

**DisabledGo** empowers disabled people to do what they want to do in their own community as well as when visiting other areas.

Thanks to the pioneering support of Angus Council and Marks & Spencer, Angus is listed on www.DisabledGo.info along with 52 areas across the UK.

Hundreds of services and facilities are listed, with information designed to answer the access questions that disabled and able-bodied people have. DisabledGo is all about recognising the breadth of disability and maximising choice.

Every DisabledGo venue is visited by an independent trained researcher, using a comprehensive audit system, to ensure information is as accurate as possible. Using a simple search engine, visitors to the site can look for a bank that has a hearing loop, a restaurant with large print menus, a solicitor who offers a home visiting service, a pub with an accessible toilet and more.

Since its launch six months ago, more than 4000 visitors have accessed the DisabledGo website, with more than 22,000 hits.

To keep the website as up to date as possible, a steering group has been established in Angus involving people with disabilities.

Trevor Eakin, steering group member and vice-chair of Spinal Injuries Scotland, has first-hand experience of how invaluable the site is for people with disabilities.

Trevor said: "Having been paralysed from below the chest for more than six years, going somewhere new was often quite daunting. This simple-to-use guide has taken a lot of the stress and worry out of finding accessible venues. I would recommend DisabledGo not just to those with a spinal cord injury, but also to all of the disabled community."

**USEFULINFO**

For more information or to join the DisabledGo Angus steering group, contact Eugene Hanshaw, partnership co-ordinator, DisabledGo, on 01438 842710 or email eugene.hanshaw@disabledgo.info

To take a look at the Angus guide, simply log on to www.DisabledGo.info and select Angus from the city/area selection.

**Tenants have their say on housing**

**ANGUS Council** is continuing to consult with its tenants on a range of issues.

Following a rent-setting consultation exercise, 86 per cent of the county’s tenants favoured an increase of 4.9 per cent. This gives tenants a new average weekly rent of £44.02 – among the lowest in Scotland.

This increase will allow investment of more than £9.7 million in Angus housing stock, including new kitchens, door replacements, and heating upgrades.

Already, about 83 per cent of Angus Council’s housing stock meets the Scottish Housing Quality standard and with this new investment will be on target for 100 per cent by 2015.

Further consultation will take place this spring with three mini-tenant conferences covering Arbroath, Camoustie and Monifieth on 26 April, Brechin and Montrose on 17 May, and Forfar and Kirriemuir on 19 April. At the events, council tenants can meet housing division staff to talk about housing issues and where they feel the council could make changes.

For more information about the conferences, contact Déirdre Mitchell, tenant participation officer, on 01307 474740.
Out and about

Are you a lover of the great outdoors who enjoys walking, cycling, horse riding, running, or any outdoor pursuit that involves using paths in Angus? Or do you own or manage land with paths on it?

If the answer is yes, the council wants to hear from you as it moves towards the final phase of designating a network of paths for the county.

Under The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, local authorities were required to draw up a plan for a system of paths to give the public reasonable access throughout their area.

Since then, the council has been working with local communities to identify and assess possible routes, with consideration being given to land management issues, environmental concerns, and the condition and potential costs of individual paths.

A network of paths, with a combined total length of approximately 550km, has now been selected for inclusion in a draft core paths plan.

This draft will be the subject of a statutory consultation for a period of 12 weeks, with members of the public invited to make representations before it is formally adopted.

It is hoped to launch the consultation in the spring and public notices will be placed in the local press with more details nearer the time.

Further information will also be available via the council’s website.

Residents and land owners are to be consulted on the creation of a network of paths which will open up the countryside and caring communities and healthy lifestyles.

A network of safe, off-road paths, will provide opportunities for a range of recreational uses, ranging from families out for a stroll to ramblers, horse riders and cyclists.

One aim of the plan is to identify a variety of accessible, circular routes of varying length, around the seven burghs as well as the smaller settlements of Newtyle, Muirhead/Birkhill, Wellbank, Letham, Friockheim, Edzell, Hillside and Ferryden.

It is expected that designated paths will be available for use at the time the plan is adopted, or will have a reasonable likelihood of being available within two years of the plan being adopted.

More information on the core paths plan is available contacting Paul Clark, countryside access officer, on 01307 473220 or at www.angus.gov.uk/hys

Arbroath and Area

THE Arbroath and Area Partnership ended 2007 in style by receiving a highly commended accolade in the Community Award section of the Angus Ambassador Awards.

The Christmas festival was also a huge success, in terms of numbers attending and donations received towards the relocation of the tree and new lights for the town.

In 2008, the partnership is looking forward to the community cinema proposals being taken forward.

A timetable of events for Tartan Week 2008 is being drawn up, and the partnership is also working on a proposal called Summer Arbroath 2008 that will put forward a combined programme of events in the town. This will include a new event, Aberbrothock 830, which will celebrate the foundation of Arbroath Abbey.

For more information on community planning, visit the website at www.angus.org.uk

The best bar none

THE best run pubs and clubs in Angus have been recognised by a prestigious new awards scheme.

The Angus Best Bar None awards aim to provide a way to identify and reward responsible operators of licensed premises and to share good practice.

The overall award for 2007 was won by Buddies Nightclub in Kirriemuir. Buddies also won the Best Club category. Best Pub category winner, was the Bridgend Bar in Brechin.

Sharky’s, Montrose; The Vault, Montfichet; City Royal Bar, Brechin; South Esk Inn, Montrose; Queen Street Tavern, Forfar; and the Royal Hotel nightclub, Forfar, were all accredited. The awards are promoted by Angus Drug and Alcohol Action Team.

www.angus.gov.uk
When pupils walk into Strathmore Primary School in Forfar, the first thing they may notice is a large plasma screen. And in the classrooms, interactive whiteboards continue to show that this is a school for the 21st century. But this isn’t a solitary example of a cutting-edge education facility – it is part of a £50 million school building programme that is providing a total of six new primary schools and one secondary across Carnoustie and Forfar.

The first phase of the building programme is complete and hundreds of children are reaping the benefits of most significant investment in the school estate by Angus Council in 40 years. Woodlands Primary was the first to open in October last year, followed by Strathmore in January, and Burnside in February. The next phases will see Whitehills open in March, Carlogie in October, and Langlands next spring. Carnoustie High School is due to be finished by this December.

Craig Clement, senior education manager, said: “We looked at all of the school estate and it became obvious that the schools in most need of improvement were in Carnoustie and Forfar. The programme is a commitment to investing in schools and improving the quality of education and preparing pupils for life in the 21st century.”

Shirley Jeans, head teacher of Woodlands Primary, said: “Our new school is beautiful in a lovely setting surrounded by mature trees”

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new school is beautiful. It’s in a lovely setting, surrounded by mature trees and parkland. The building is purpose-built with a wide range of hi-tech equipment which allows us to put into place an active learning environment designed to engage children in a challenging and enjoyable way.”

Dawn Archibald, head teacher of Strathmore Primary, is also delighted with her new school: “It is absolutely fantastic, and in a unique situation with a beautiful Victorian façade, but with a 21st century state-of-the-art interior.”

The schools have many other features shaped around the needs of pupils and even the community. Many of the classrooms have doors that allow classes to spill outside into the fresh air.

The interiors have also been designed to be semi-open plan to support the council’s curriculum for co-operative learning.

The facilities are also being used by the community outside school hours. Dawn explained: “We see our school as having a welcoming and inclusive ethos that brings the whole community together. The building is great, but it is the people – from the staff to pupils and the wider community – and how they take advantage of the new facilities that is taking our school forward as a success.”

**VOXPOPS**

**What the children think of their new schools**

“I really like the computers, they are really fast and new."

“It is brilliant here because of all the new things."

“When I first came into the school, the first words that I came up with were ‘amazing’, ‘fab’ and ‘huge’."

“I like the windows in our classroom – you can see the sun, trees and people walking past."

“My first impression of the new school was ‘wow’ because of the size – it’s massive."

“I can’t wait for the football pitch to be ready – it is going to be the best."

“It is really cool. I especially like the ICT Suite because of the space, the new computers and the comfy seats."

“I like the interactive whiteboard because you can watch TV and play different games on it.”
Arbroath’s Webster Theatre has undergone a multi-million pound refurbishment – and hitting the right note with audiences at the official opening of the stunning new venue was the world-famous Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

A gala opening concert by the prestigious Royal Scottish National Orchestra and an appearance by top Scots comedian Frankie Boyle has ensured the new life of the Webster Theatre begins on a high note. The multi-million pound refurbishment sets the venue on a par with other top theatres in Scotland.

The revamped theatre in Arbroath was officially opened in style in January with a visit by the RSNO, which included a concert for pre-school children and a sell-out gala concert to officially open the venue to the public.

Speaking after the opening night, the RSNO’s chief executive Simon Woods said: “It was an enormous pleasure for the RSNO to be the first group to perform in the newly reopened Webster Theatre. The building is a jewel, and the exceptionally high quality of the renovation is a credit to Arbroath and to the entire region. We hope to return soon!”

The theatre, in Arbroath High Street, has long been a landmark in the town as the preferred place for shows and concerts by local organisations, as well as a venue for touring shows and performances.

The building’s history can be traced back to 1867, and the last major refurbishment to the hall was carried out in the 1970s. By 2004, the theatre’s technical infrastructure had become outdated and in need of complete replacement.

Angus Council was faced with a number of choices: close the theatre permanently, do a refit to bring the theatre up to meet statutory requirements, or completely revamp the theatre.

A decision was taken to completely refurbish the theatre at a cost of more than £4.5m, so lifting the building into the 21st century and creating theatre facilities to make it comparable with the best which Scotland can offer.

The building was closed, stripped back to a shell and rebuilt internally. A new exterior canopy has been created and the extensive entrance foyer now gives a light, airy and welcoming appearance, enhanced by attractive glass panels bearing the theatre’s logo.

The foyer also now boasts a new box office, bar and cloakroom. Inside, state-of-the-art electronic sound and lighting systems, a lift, dressing rooms, a

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**Forthcoming Events**

Shows coming up at the Webster include the Angus Musical Youth Theatre with We Will Rock You from Tuesday 18 March to Saturday 22 March and the Singing Kettle’s Pirate Island on Saturday 29 March and Sunday 30 March. More information is available from the box office on 01241 435800, open from 9.30am to 2.45pm, or via the website at www.webstertheatre.co.uk
The control room and offices have been installed. The main auditorium has been revamped, refitted and refloored and the stage now benefits from automatic hydraulics for the stage extension which allows it to be raised effortlessly.

A new space has been created in the assembly hall to provide an area for conferences, lectures, small performances or rehearsals. Disabled access is available throughout the building, allowing easy access for performers and visitors alike.

Colin Dakers, arts manager, said: “I am delighted the refurbishment has been completed and to such a high standard. “We now have a theatre that is fit for the 21st century and capable of meeting the needs of the local community in terms of support for arts organisations and for the audience.

“We can not only host traditional performing arts events in the 500-seater main auditorium, but with the much improved facilities in the 70-plus seater Assembly Hall and the studio space, we can also stage smaller-scale productions, cinema screenings, comedy and cabaret, as well as having the ability to stage conferences, lectures and workshops.

“If we can get the theatre to operate at even half of its potential, I anticipate an exciting and lively future in the years ahead.”

> It was an enormous pleasure for the RSNO to be the first group to perform in the newly reopened Webster Theatre. The building is a jewel – a credit to Arbroath. We hope to return soon.

Simon Woods, RSNO chief executive
It’s difficult to argue with the beauty of Angus as an area to live and visit, but recent economic developments in the area mean it’s also a great place to do business.

Angus’s industrial and commercial property market is at its most buoyant in years, according to experts in the council’s economic development team.

Development officer Derek Bean said: “Our area appears to be bucking the national trend. Reports in the news keep suggesting that the UK is heading for a recession, but we have not found this to be the case at all in Angus.”

The demand for business land in the area is currently sitting at previously untouched levels, with a number of major developments pending on the council’s business parks in Arbroath, Brechin, Forfar and Montrose.

Meanwhile, the letting market is achieving similarly impressive results. The council is committed to maximising the economic potential of the county, and is the county’s largest supplier of business units to lease, and occupancy levels have recently reached more than 90 per cent – a performance unparalleled in Angus Council’s 12-year history.

This upsurge has encouraged private sector developers to get in on the act. Privately funded workshop units have just been built in Arbroath, while speculative warehouses, workshops and offices are planned for Forfar.

Derek added: “Angus is an attractive area to do business because of the low costs, the availability of premises and our
traditionally strong workforce. As a semi-rural area, we have always lagged some way behind other parts of the country in terms of private investment, but all that is changing.

“If the current enquiries we are handling come to fruition, high-quality, affordable premises should be on tap for at least a decade to come. And this would be nothing but a big win for the local economy.”

New business parks are planned for Carnoustie and Kirriemuir and the council hopes that private developers can be encouraged to lead on the schemes. The new visitor centre at Arbroath also offers a range of retail and office units to rent and the council is confident the centre will play a major role in the development of the town’s economy in the coming years.

To find out more about business property opportunities in Angus, phone 01307 473284 or visit the website www.angusproperty.com

OFFERING SCOPE FOR EXPANSION

JUST over 12 months ago, travel information firm Journeycall, which has its headquarters in Laurencekirk, Aberdeenshire, opened a second site at Brechin business park, where it now employs 30 people.

The company is a call-handling and fulfillment business specialising in public transport. Its clients include Transport for London (TfL), for which it provides telephone support for TfL’s Oystercard, a plastic card used to pay for public transport in the capital.

Journeycall also operates Train and Bus Enquiries, a telephone and internet information service, as well as handling telesales for Stagecoach Group’s Megabus service.

The company employs a total of 80 people and the opening of its second site at Brechin has enabled it to diversify into other areas of the call-handling market.

Managing director Quentin Macfarlane said: “I approached Angus Council’s economic development team and they told me about a vacant site at Brechin.

“The council fitted it out for us and we moved in at the beginning of 2007 and were able to develop our business as a result.”

The additional capacity for future expansion is there, should Journeycall need it in future. Quentin is quite happy to recommend Angus as an area for business growth.

He added: “In terms of our requirements, we knew from the data supplied to us that there was an adequate number of potential staff who were the right calibre available in Brechin.

“We had a very good response to our recruitment adverts and the quality of staff we now have in place is very high.”

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Quentin Macfarlane, Journeycall

Montrose Business Centre has attracted so much interest that it is currently fully occupied
Carnoustie’s promenade is set for an exciting £1.2 million revamp – and local young people will soon be asked to become involved with the design and choice of new equipment on the popular promenade.

Carnoustie has long been a favourite seaside holiday resort, well known for the fine sandy Carnoustie Bay and, of course, as a venue for The Open, it attracts golf lovers from around the world.

To ensure that the town has modern and exciting facilities for both locals and visitors, the council decided it was time to redevelop the seafront.

A consultation exercise has just been completed by the council with residents who were encouraged to give their comments on the initial design and a list of suggested improvements. The designs were on display in the library, leisure centre, community centre and Access Office, together with feedback forms that were also distributed to pupils at the high school.

The proposals were also outlined at the Carnoustie Community Council meeting and through the Carnoustie Area Partnership.

Roy Madden, regeneration and countryside planning manager, is now analysing the feedback so he can take the comments on board before the project is subject to planning permission.

He said: “The earlier consultation in 2006 gave the council a clear idea of what people would like to have in the area and with these outline proposals, we have tried as far as possible to meet the aspirations of the local community.

“The intention is to create an exciting and imaginative leisure and play area that will make the seafront a major attraction for local residents and visitors.”

Central to the redevelopment is the proposed enlargement and enhancement of the play area. The proposal is to retain some of the existing play equipment and add to it to give a wide variety of play opportunities for toddlers through to teenagers.

“We are particularly keen for young people to have their say on this project as they will be the ones who will be using many of the facilities on the seafront.

“We had 680 replies from schoolchildren to our initial consultation on the project last summer.”

Did you know?
The first 18-hole golf course in Carnoustie was established in 1842.

REDEVELOPMENT PLANS

THE seafront redevelopment at Carnoustie will involve the enlargement of the existing play area and the installation of new equipment to create a major attraction for local residents and visitors.

The outline concept proposes:

- Complementing the existing play facilities with new modern equipment
- Enclosing the enlarged play areas with a landscaped fence and wall that will include extra seating
- Building a two-metre high horizontal climbing wall
- Reshaping the existing paddling pool into a fun pool with stepping stones and lined with rubberised non-slip material
- Installing a new nine-hole crazy golf course
- Constructing a youth shelter and a street course for skateboarding
- Improved signage to direct people to the public toilets located in the nearby leisure centre
- A general upgrade of footpath links between the promenade and the central path, additional earth mounding to provide better shelter, picnic/barbecue areas, improved signage and CCTV cameras on the leisure centre
- The rest garden will be cleared of overgrown vegetation to enhance the sense of security and be retained as an informal area, providing views to the seafront.
With mounting fuel and food bills, it’s generally agreed that the cost of living is going to rise for us all this year.

This is tough news for the thousands of people already struggling to pay off credit cards and other bills which are now hitting doormats following the festive season.

But the message from money advice experts is don’t panic – seek help as quickly as possible if you are experiencing problems balancing the books and a solution can often be found.

Angus Council’s welfare rights team and Angus Citizens Advice Bureau work in partnership to offer a money advice service to anyone in the county with financial problems.

Welfare rights manager George Meechan explains how taking that first step to seek help is often the most difficult: “Often when people find themselves having problems with debt they ignore it, hoping that it will go away.

“They will continue to receive the calls from credit companies pressing for overdue payments, and the constant stream of final demand letters.

“People in this position know that they need to deal with the problem, but somehow cannot make the call asking for help.

“The message from the Angus Money Advice Service is to make that call. No-one will judge you and no-one else needs to know you are getting help – just you and your adviser. Last year, money advisers within Angus helped local people deal with many millions of pounds in problem debt.

“The service is free and confidential and an adviser can arrange to meet you to discuss your problems.”

MARY approached a money adviser for help with her debts of £14,000, which were costing £650 a month in repayments.

After a couple of meetings with a money adviser, Mary decided that her best option was to go down the route of a Trust Deed, which acts as formal agreement between an individual and their creditors and stops all creditor demands.

This enabled her to pay off her debts by repaying £200 per month over 36 months.

KAREN is a single parent with two young children. She had separated from her husband a year before seeking debt advice. Karen doesn’t work, but attends a part-time access course at college, for which she receives no bursary.

Her only income was child support, child tax credit and child benefit. She had multiple debts including fuel debt, council tax arrears and consumer debts. She rented a property privately and did not receive full housing benefit.

A money adviser was able to assist Karen to obtain an extra payment to help pay her rent by way of an application to the discretionary housing payment scheme. Some assistance from the Working for Families project was also secured.

After ensuring that Karen’s income was maximised, the adviser was able to negotiate with Karen’s creditors to reduce her monthly payments to a more manageable level.

This has allowed her to continue with her studies without the added pressure that her financial situation was causing her.

If you’re having debt problems, contact the Money Advice Service via ACCESSLine on 08452 777778.

It could be your first step in the right direction and give you back control.

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Let’s talk about sex

Shock statistics show that the pregnancy rate among 13 to 15 year olds in Angus is above the national average.

Determined to tackle this alarming trend, partners from health, the WEB voluntary project and education have launched a scheme to give young people access to free condoms and sexual health and wellbeing information.

The C-card scheme was launched as a pilot in 2007, and has proved such a success with young people that plans are under way to extend it this year.

Freda Stewart, health improvement partnership manager, said: “It is important that young people are educated about other issues relating to sexual health and wellbeing to help reduce the high numbers of sexually transmitted infections and unplanned teenage pregnancies and the use of condoms is part of that education.

“The scheme has increased availability, accessibility, acceptability and attractiveness of use of condoms to young people under 25 in Angus.

“Interestingly, high numbers of young men are accessing the service and the scheme has exceeded expectations with information about the scheme being passed by word of mouth through the young people themselves.”

The card is currently distributed from a variety of venues, including the Web Project and the Youth Bytes! Bus, which goes out to various locations in Angus. This means young people can access the service wherever they live.

Several GP practices have indicated that they are keen to use the C-card initiative in their practices and discussions are also under way with community pharmacists to expand the pilot as part of their service.

In addition, Angus College and Dundee University are both keen to launch the scheme to their August intake of students.

Further initiatives for Angus include expanding the age range and access for the free emergency hormonal contraceptive service through community pharmacists. There’s also the launch of a leaflet designed for young people asking them to stop and think “Am I really ready for a sexual relationship?” and encouraging them to delay if not.

In addition, sexual health and relationship education within Angus secondary schools has recently been reviewed to build on existing good practice and create a more consistent approach across all schools.

This work will be complemented through provision of additional resources and training for staff.
The Carnoustie Partnership, along with other local community planning partnerships, has been asked to consider new priorities for its areas and look at potential projects.

The main issues in Carnoustie for the partnership are the development of the Kinloch School site and also the impending improvements at the seafront (see pages 14 & 15).

The Carnoustie Partnership is keen to welcome representation from local organisations and any individuals with an interest in the future of Carnoustie.

For more information on community planning visit www.angus.org.uk

Useful advice to keep your children safe online

ANGUS Council's child protection team is urging parents to sign up to a new website which will help them understand what their children are doing online.

Parents, and their children, can log on at thinkuknow.co.uk and learn how to stay safe online.

The website is run by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) centre – a multi-agency organisation aimed at tackling child sex abuse.

The internet is now an essential part of young people’s everyday lives, and parents can register for updates that will help keep their children safe.

Community Council Scheme under review

As revealed in the last edition of Angus Life, Angus Council is embarking on a review of its Community Council Scheme.

The members of the working group established to take this forward are: Angus councillors: Colin Brown, Peter Murphy, Helen Oswald, Mark Salmond, Paul Valentine; community councillors: Mike Cosans (Arbroath), Douglas Murray (Brechin), Ralph Morris (Carnoustie), Graham Newton (Ferryden & Craig), Isobel Ross (Forfar), Shaun Topen-Cooper (Glamis), Louise Nicoll (Inverarity), Isobel Sword (Letham), Jim Moir (Lundie), Muirhead & Birkhill), Stewart Ellis (Monifieth), Marianne Mitchelson (Newtyle & Eassie), Weronika Krajewaska (Strathmartine); Angus Council officers: Bill Strachan, senior service manager, Sheona Hunter, head of law & administration, Carol Petrie, decentralisation officer, Shona Cameron, projects and elections officer.

The first meeting of the group was held on 11 February.

You can follow progress at www.angus.gov.uk/ccreview

TALK HEALTH

Confidential health phoneline for young people in Angus – phone or text:

07887 917203 or the web project on 01307 460101

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Angus Council has welcomed the Scottish Government’s consultation on the future of housing as a significant opportunity for local authorities to play their part in revitalising Scotland’s housing sector.

Local councillors and officials are ready to have a genuine discussion with national politicians on various aspects of housing policy including:

- ending tenants’ right to buy their homes
- encouraging councils to build new public sector housing
- taking the views of tenants into consideration.

The council’s 24-page response has asked ministers to tackle antisocial behaviour as part of the development process, and the council looks forward to a housing programme that balances national need with local control.

Safety is high on the Angus agenda and forms part of the council’s vision to promote safe and caring communities.

Publicly funded houses built for rent or sale in the Angus area will in future have sprinkler systems fitted as standard, after trials convinced the council that such systems save lives.

Angus is in favour of the Scottish Government’s proposals over the future direction of private rented housing stock and, at a recent meeting with private landlords, recorded massive local interest in the subject.

Head of housing Alan McKeown said: “Angus has a shortage of readily available, affordable housing. This area has an acknowledged trend of rising house prices – in Montrose, for example, we have some of the fastest-growing house prices in Scotland.

“There is a growing trend in the need for affordable housing for all sectors, but a shortage of available development land on which to build such homes.”

He added: “Our response to the Scottish Government has been informed by discussions with our tenants’ movement, and by specific discussions with our elected members.”

The response is based upon nine principles, including:

- that tenants/prospective purchasers of publicly funded homes in Angus should expect the same, if not higher, design and build standards as those who own their own housing
- that all socially rented or affordable homes built in Angus with the benefit of public subsidy should take all reasonable steps to ensure they minimise their carbon footprint.

Alan added: “There is a balance to be struck between the focus on development, value for money, on standards of build and the environment and on how to professionally manage tenancies and communities. It is clear to our communities and to many of our tenants that this balance requires adjustment.

“There is great hope that this paper will provide that adjustment and we believe that it is a step in the right direction.”
Offering a vital lifeline for carers

Until a couple of years ago, Willie and Marlene were enjoying a well-earned retirement with a busy social life, holidays abroad and a shared passion for golf. Then Willie was diagnosed with dementia.

“When the doctor told us, we just held on to each other,” said Marlene. “Since then, our lives have changed dramatically.”

Marlene now runs the household and their finances, is the sole driver and, as the condition has progressed, has become Willie’s full-time carer.

With dementia prevalent in the over 65s and a 75 per cent increase forecast in the next two decades, the couple’s story is replicated across the county.

Angus Council and NHS Tayside are now sharing expertise and resources to deliver a broad range of specialist support services for people with dementia – from early diagnosis and daycare to respite and residential care.

Social Work & Health service manager Delia Hislop said the services are helping both those with dementia and their carers: “There is still a stigma attached to the condition and an initial reluctance to accept diagnosis, so carers can be near breaking point before services are accepted, often leading to admissions to care homes and hospitals.

“We’re working to reduce these admissions through the development of dedicated services for people with dementia. In the past year, for example, we’ve increased specialist daycare by 800 per cent and now offer 136 places across Angus. “As people with dementia have difficulty managing unfamiliar settings, traditional daycare often doesn’t suit, so we provide specialist daycare in custom-designed premises.

“At centres such as Provost Johnstone Road in Montrose and Beech Hill House in Forfar, we offer a stimulating environment and a flexible and supportive service.

“Individuals and their families have trust and confidence in the staff, whose temperament and training make sure that daycare is an enjoyable and rejuvenating experience for everyone involved,” said Delia.

The council’s specialist daycare service for people with dementia has been nominated for a national excellence award – the icing on the cake for the service that already gets the thumbs up from those using it.

For Marlene and Willie, it has been a lifesaver: “Willie loves it and I get the day to myself to catch up with friends over a coffee or on the golf course. It’s a real lifesaver.”

Above: daycare services in Angus provide a much welcome respite for carers and a stimulating and enjoyable experience for people with dementia

>> Carers can be near breaking point before services are accepted, often leading to admissions to care homes and hospitals

Delia Hislop, Social Work & Health service manager

Insight into Parliament

THE priorities for the Forfar and Area Partnership for 2008 are:

• the feasibility of establishing a community centre in Forfar
• tackling antisocial behaviour
• to support the work of the tourism group with Gala Week/Day 2008, Tartan Week 2008 and the Marafun.

The partnership recently visited the Scottish Parliament. The programme included a visit to the Parliament building and an opportunity to discuss local and national issues with MSPs.

It is hoped a similar session will be held soon to which representatives from other local area partnerships will be invited.

For more information, visit the community planning website at www.angus.org.uk

Update on Southmuir Primary

THE Kirriemuir and The Glens Partnership recently received an update on the future use of the old Southmuir Primary School site, and plans for the extension of Webster’s High School.

An update was also given to the partnership on the work of the Kirriemuir Heritage Trust group towards marking the 150th anniversary of the birth of JM Barrie in 2010.

Heritage-linked projects in which the group are to be involved include a grand charity Ball of Kirriemuir and a children’s literary festival.

For more information, visit the community planning website at www.angus.org.uk

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