

ANGUS COUNCIL  
POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 10 FEBRUARY 1998  
COMMUNITY COUNCIL SCHEME - REVIEW  
REPORT BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

**ABSTRACT**

This report details progress in achieving the single Angus Community Council Administrative Scheme and suggests the commencement of a gradual review process which would lead to a new Community Council Administrative Scheme being introduced to meet the changing circumstances of the Council and Community Councils.

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the contents of this Report:-
- 1.1.1 approve consultation with Community Councils with a view to a further review of the Angus Council Community Council Scheme; and
  - 1.1.2 recommend to Community Councils the formation of a Working Group of representatives of the Council, Community Councils and officials to consider improvement of the existing administrative scheme, changes in the Constitutions of Community Councils and updated methods of operation and financial matters.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 With reference to Report No 882/96 to the Policy and Resources Committee of 29 October 1996, it will be recalled that the Council agreed to commence the revocation of the then two Community Council Administrative Schemes in the area: that for the former Angus District Council area and that for the former City of Dundee District Council area. With the completion of elections to the new Community Councils in the autumn of last year, that process has now been completed.
- 2.2 It will also be recalled that the Council confirmed its commitment to begin a further review of the new Community Council Administrative Scheme by 31 December 1998. This was on the basis that the Council should carry out a two stage plan to achieve a fully revised Angus Council Community Council Administrative Scheme compatible with modern needs.

The first stage was to bring both of the then different schemes for the former Angus District and Dundee District into alignment in one scheme. The second stage was to review the overall operation of the scheme, taking into account the impact of legislative change, in particular the decentralisation

proposals, the amendment to the number of wards in the Council area (from 26 to 29) and the changes which had led to a greater role being played by Community Councils e.g. consultation on all planning applications.

- 2.3 In addition, questions had been raised by members as to the way in which divisional boundaries (i.e. internal Community Council boundaries) operated and how membership of Community Councils was allocated on the basis of these boundaries.
- 2.4 This Report deals with all of these aspects and suggests a programme to be carried out over the next two years leading to an updated Community Council Administrative Scheme for the Angus area.

### 3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 It is suggested that during the course of the calendar year 1998 opportunity should be taken to raise with Community Councils proposed changes in the scheme and how these might be achieved. This would provide a lead-in to the actual review process to begin by December 1998.
- 3.2 The overall aim would be to have a revised scheme ready for operation by the end of the present lifespan of the existing Community Councils, October 2000 when the next Community Council Elections are due.
- 3.3 The changes suggested would fall into three broad categories:-
  - 3.3.1 changes in boundaries;
  - 3.3.2 revision of the content of the scheme to ensure that it reflects more appropriately the relationship between the Council and Community Councils; and
  - 3.3.3 revision to ensure that Community Council may work more effectively.

### 4. REVISION OF BOUNDARIES

- 4.1 Because of ward boundary changes over the year, Community Council boundaries are quite significantly different in a number of cases from the ward boundaries. A map will be exhibited at the meeting, showing the existing Community Council boundaries and the boundaries of the existing wards. The ward boundaries as they will exist in 2000 are not yet finalised.
- 4.2 It will be seen, for example, that Ward 6 takes in all or part of some nine Community Council areas. In other cases, such as in the former burghs, community council areas may lie either completely within the former burgh areas, as in Arbroath and Monifieth, whereas in other cases, the community council areas, the community council area takes in both the former burgh and landward areas, e.g. Forfar and Brechin.
- 4.3 An opportunity would also be taken to revise the boundaries to ensure that every area was in fact covered by a Community Council. It should be noted that certain areas within the Council area do not have an operational Community Council - Carmyllie, Colliston and Arbirlot, Farnell and Kingsmuir.
- 4.4 In addition, given that Area Forums are now operating in Montrose and Monifieth and the Council has agreed to extend the operation to all parts of

Angus, it would also be useful to ensure that Community Councils generally are included within the area of not more than one Forum.

- 4.5 However, it will have to be understood that it is not possible to draw boundaries of Community Councils which will meet all of the above objectives. There may have to be compromises in certain areas given that the purpose of Community Councils is to represent communities which have developed over the years, whereas the ward boundaries are primarily drawn to ensure that there is a balance as between the number of electors in the various wards.
- 4.6 It should also be noted that in the case of Arbroath, the existing revised Scheme has already aligned the existing ward boundaries within the former Arbroath Town Council area with divisions for the Community Council.
- 4.7 On that aspect, members will recall that questions were raised with regard to geographical divisions in existing Community Council and how these operated. The existing Scheme provides that Community Councils may be split into geographical divisions, either by the Community Council itself or by the Council or by the Returning Officer.
- 4.8 From a survey carried out of all Community Councils, it appears that only in Arbroath and Letham is there a formal division. In other Community Councils there are informal understandings that there should be representation from different parts of the communities, but generally there is no great use of the provision for allocation into divisions. Equally, representation on a divisional basis does not appear to have been a problem for most Community Councils.
- 4.9 It should also be noted that in the present Scheme election to Community Councils can be on one of a number of bases provided in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 i.e. a candidate can either be on the electoral role; or have occupied for 12 months land or premises in the area; or have a principal or only place of work in the area; or have resided in the area for 12 months.
- 4.10 In the former City of Dundee Scheme, the qualifications for standing for election were more tightly drawn in that prospective membership was restricted to residents in the area.
- 4.11 In addition, prior to any changes being proposed, it would be useful to establish a dialogue with the Community Council. It is likely that the formal proposals for changes in the Council ward boundaries will be introduced during course of the year and it would therefore also be useful to have discussions underway with Community Councils as to the boundaries which may be affected by ward changes.

## **5. CHANGES TO ENSURE MORE APPROPRIATE REFLECTION OF RELATIONSHIP**

- 5.1 With regard to changes to the Scheme to ensure that it reflects more appropriately the relationship between the Council and the Community Councils, the following points are made.
  - 5.1.1 As noted, there have been a number of changes introduced by the 1994 Local Government Etc. (Scotland) Act and other legislation affecting Community Councils. For instance, Community Councils are now consulted on all planning applications and they are also invited to

participate in Area Forums. Equally, given the advent of the Best Value system they may also play an important role in community consultation exercises that will be required as part of the Council's overall modus operandi.

- 5.1.2 It is suggested therefore that it would be appropriate to reflect the higher profile of Community Councils in any updated scheme, and, there are also areas where Community Councils may wish to take an increased interest
- 5.1.3 With regard to the revision of the Scheme to ensure more effective working of Community Councils, it will be recalled that there was advice from the last Government on the role of Community Councils, particularly taking into account decentralisation proposals. That advice saw Community Councils as having to take steps to ensure a more effective role for their members and equally proposed steps by local authorities to promote better liaison with community councils.
- 5.1.4 The proposals included community councils positively supporting Local Government and trying to establish close, constructive relationships with local authorities and councillors and other organisations. Community Councils were also encouraged to recognise the importance of developing a wide range of contacts to seek the widest possible range of support and to actively seek the views and opinions of the community.
- 5.1.5 It was also suggested that their work should be visible and accessible, by issuing newsletters and questionnaires etc., and holding regular public meetings and encouraging attendance.
- 5.1.6 Local authorities were encouraged to ensure that Community Councils had the opportunity for discussions; that they were involved in Planning and Licensing matters; that relevant information was made available to them. Local authorities were also asked to consider how the Community Councils should have a say on local priorities.
- 5.1.7 There were also proposals to review the schemes to establish election or other voting arrangements to attract as broad a representation from the local community as possible, including a standard election day for Community Council elections and promoting activities to increase public awareness in respect of elections and Community Council activities.
- 5.1.8 It was also suggested that there should be financial and technical support to help the Community Council.
- 5.1.9 A number of these matters have already been tackled by the Council, but clearly there are other aspects which could be considered as part of any further revision to the Scheme and by updating the contents of the Constitutions of the Community Councils and their Standing Orders.

## 6. COMMENTS

- 6.1 Although the initial stage of change in the administrative schemes has been achieved relatively smoothly, it is clear that there is still a considerable distance to be travelled in terms of a full review of Community Council operations.
- 6.2 The recent elections for Community Councils in Angus have shown that there is a relatively low level of public interest in the elections. Whilst it may be argued that this reflects a general public apathy in local government affairs, it can also be argued that Community Councils have an important statutory role to play and further efforts should be made to ensure that this is reflected in the way in which they are constituted and operate.
- 6.3 It is suggested that this will be of particular relevance taking into account the new Government's proposals with regard to Best Value and particularly the need for consultation with the community on Council proposals.
- 6.4 Whilst this does not necessarily mean that consultation should always be carried out through Community Councils, they clearly have a statutory role to carry out and it would seem logical to reinforce that role by ensuring that Community Councils can participate fully in providing a local focal point for expression of community views.
- This would also raise questions as to their role alongside Area Forums, where the Council considers there should be complementarity as between Area Forums and Community Councils.
- 6.5 The present election arrangements are very much left to the discretion of the Returning Officer, who is the Director of Law and Administration. The Returning Officer would wish to review the election arrangements to provide more detailed rules, modelled on the local government election rules, and to attempt to maximise the turnout for elections. Discussions will take place with community councils in this regard.
- 6.6 Equally, a number of points were raised during the course of the earlier consultation with Community Councils before the present revised administrative scheme was introduced. Members will recall there was considerable comment from Letham Community Council who raised a number of matters where they felt community council administration should be updated. A number of these have again been tackled (e.g. insurance cover for members and training for Community Councillors), but a number of items are still outstanding.
- 6.7 A particular matter of general concern was the level of administration grants paid by the Council to community councils. It should be noted there have been substantial increases in the grants allocated to Community Councils since the start of the new councils (up some 25% compared with grants allocated under the earlier schemes).
- 6.8 In addition, given the higher profile of Community Council members, consideration could be given to a code of conduct to apply to Community Council members similar to the code which applies to local authority members.

## 7. FINANCE

- 7.1 Details of present financial allocations are given in Annexation. In addition to the administrative grant given to Community Councils last year, a further £100 was given to them for photocopying and they were also allowed the use of Community Education photocopying facilities at a cost of 2p per copy.
- 7.2 However, if there is to be a continuing development of the role of Community Councils, e.g. local newsletters and additional communication with the Council, then there are likely to be additional financial needs generated. In addition, the allocation of grant in the earlier administrative schemes comprised a basic amount plus a headage amount based on the population of the Community Council area. This has been replaced in the new Scheme with a banding system which relates to the population of the Community Council within a number of bands. The allocations to the various Community Councils are shown in the Annexation together with a comparison with the former payments.
- 7.3 It will be seen on the basis of payments per number of members and payments per head of population within the area, there are considerable variations between the community councils. It is suggested that this is an aspect which will have to be taken into account in any period of review.
- 7.4 It should also be noted that the budget for Community Councils allows for the payment for or use of halls or other premises by Community Councils (up to 12 per year) and payment of grants for individual Community Council schemes on a pound-for-pound basis. As the Council now has a general scheme for the allocation of grants, consideration may require to be given to including the allocation of specific project grants to community (not for administration) in the Council's general grants scheme, so that one-off projects such as the improvement of parking facilities within villages etc., might be considered along with other general grant scheme applications.

## 8. PROPOSED ACTION

- 8.1 In order that there may be full consultation with Community Council members before the formal introduction of a proposed revised scheme, it is suggested it would be advantageous to have a Working Group of representatives of the Council and Community Councils (along with appropriate officials) to consider how a more effective relationship between the Council and Community Councils could be developed.

It is proposed that this report be circulated to the Councils following consideration by committee. This would then allow reaction from the Community Councils to be fed back to the bi-annual meeting between representatives of the Council and Community Councils and general discussion of the proposals. The Community Councils would be requested to give their reaction to the setting up of a Working Group which would consider:-

- 8.1.1 revision of the Community Council areas;

- 8.1.2 revision of the Administrative Scheme to more appropriately reflect the relationship between the Council and Community Councils;
- 8.1.3 revision of the Scheme to ensure more effective operation of the Community Council; and
- 8.1.4 revision of the financial allocations basis.

Such consideration would be carried out during the period before the official introduction of the revised scheme so that there could be full consultation on any proposed amendments.

## 9. CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 In light of the Council's commitment to the development of partnerships, particularly with local communities, and other proposals such as those under Best Value, where there is a stress on the importance of the customer/citizen focus, it would be advantageous to review the functioning of Community Councils in the area. There is a need and indeed a commitment to commence such a review by the end of the year.
- 9.2 Prior to that review commencing, it would be helpful to have a Working Group set up which would consider all of the aspects referred to above so that the formal process of review could then proceed on the basis of views from the Working Group.

## 10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no financial implications at this stage.

## 11. CONSULTATION

- 11.1 All members of the Management Team have been consulted in the preparation of this Report.

**Note:** No background papers as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

A B Watson  
Chief Executive

16 December 1997

Annexation Name of Community Council	Population	No of members	Pop'n per member	Total Grant 97/98	Grant pre 1997	1997/98-Grant p/head of pop'n	1997/98 Grant per member
Royal Burgh of Arbroath	23570	18	1309	£770.00	£640.00	£0.03	£42.78
Aberlennio	453	10	45	£375.00	£200.00	£0.83	£37.50
Auchterhouse	500	9	56	£375.00	£233.00	£0.75	£41.67
City of Brechin & District	7890	13	607	£680.00	£440.00	£0.09	£52.31
Carmyllie, Colliston, Arbirlot*	1591	12	133				£0.00
Camoustie	11267	12	939	£770.00	£520.00	£0.07	£64.17
Farnell*	538	10	54				£0.00
Ferryden & Craig	1412	12	118	£400.00	£240.00	£0.28	£33.33
Forfar	13270	16	829	£770.00	£650.00	£0.06	£48.13
Fowls, Liff & Benvie	611	9	68	£375.00	£242.00	£0.61	£41.67
Frickheim & District	1594	12	133	£400.00	£240.00	£0.25	£33.33
Glamis	935	10	94	£375.00	£220.00	£0.40	£37.50
Hillside, Dun & Logie Perit	2136	12	178	£400.00	£240.00	£0.19	£33.33
Inverarity	534	8	67	£375.00	£220.00	£0.70	£46.88
Inveresk	2100	21	100	£400.00	£240.00	£0.19	£19.05
Inverkeilor & District	1662	10	166	£400.00	£240.00	£0.24	£40.00
Kingsmuir*	268	9	30				£0.00
Kirriemuir	5553	10	555	£680.00	£360.00	£0.12	£68.00
Kirriemuir Landward East	1822	9	202	£400.00	£240.00	£0.22	£44.44
Kirriemuir Landward West	1725	14	123	£400.00	£240.00	£0.23	£28.57
Letham & District	1716	10	172	£400.00	£240.00	£0.23	£40.00
Lunanhead & District	717	9	80	£375.00	£220.00	£0.52	£41.67
Lundie, Muirhead & Birkhill	2059	9	229	£400.00	£257.00	£0.19	£44.44
Monifieth	7861	13	605	£680.00	£343.00	£0.09	£52.31
Monikie & Newbigging	1408	10	141	£400.00	£216.00	£0.28	£40.00
Murroes & Wellbank	11487	15	766	£770.00	£540.00	£0.07	£41.67
Newlye & Eassie	932	9	104	£375.00	£247.00	£0.40	£25.00
Strathmartine	1091	16	68	£400.00	£220.00	£0.37	£25.00
Tealing	503	9	65	£375.00	£233.00	£0.64	£41.67
Totals	785	9	87	£375.00	£238.00	£0.48	£41.67
	108070	345		£12,895.00	£8,159.00		
Notes							
*not operational						1997	1997
Average population per Comm. Council **	3602					Av'ge grant p/head of pop'n	Av'ge grant per m'ber
Total Number of Community Councilors**	345				Av'ge grant pre-97	£0.32	£37.75
Overall population per Comm. Councilor**	313				£302.19		
**There are three areas where Community Councils do not operate. In addition, Community Councils may not have a full quota of members or may co-opt additional members and the figures do not take account of this.							