

ANGUS COUNCIL**POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 24 MARCH 1998****SOCIAL INCLUSION: A CORPORATE POLICY FOR ANGUS:**

- (a) **Angus Approach to Social Inclusion/Perspective of CoSLA Social Welfare Task Group**
- (b) **Draft Response to Scottish Office Consultation Paper "Social Exclusion"**

**JOINT REPORT BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND THE
DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK****ABSTRACT**

This report sets out a proposed broad approach to social inclusion in Angus which adopts the perspective of the CoSLA Social Welfare Task Group and also a draft response to the Scottish Office consultation paper "Social Exclusion". An earlier version of this report was submitted to the Social Policy Sub-Committee of the Policy and Resources Committee and this report incorporates the views of that Sub-Committee.

1. RECOMMENDATION

The Policy and Resources Committee is asked to:-

- (a) approve the methodology set out in the report as to a local authority's role in Social Inclusion;
- (b) approve the appendix to this report as the Council's response to the consultation paper on "Social Exclusion"; and
- (c) instruct Officers to prepare detailed proposals for action and submit these to the Social Policy Sub-Committee in the first instance for their consideration.

2. INTRODUCTION

Angus Council has adopted 'Social Inclusion' as a corporate priority linked to the seven key themes of the Council. The scope of the social inclusion agenda is wide and has relevance within millennium targets, the corporate priority workplan and our strategic approach to local agenda 21, rural

partnerships, healthy alliances, new deal, safer communities and other partnerships. The Social Policy Sub-Committee has been asked to co-ordinate the policy development and co-ordination of social inclusion within the Council.

The Scottish Office has recently issued a consultation paper 'Social Exclusion in Scotland' seeking views from all interested parties on current policies and practices and on options and priorities for the future. The key themes running through the paper are:

- the need for increased co-ordination of effort
- the need to identify intervention which can prevent social exclusion
- the need to develop (or expand) innovative approaches to the problem.

The Scottish Office has also issued a consultation document "Working Together for a Healthier Scotland" which stresses the need for partnerships for health involving the National Health Service, local authorities, voluntary organisations and the private sector which reach out to local communities and individual citizens.

A recent report by the Scottish Council Foundation has suggested that Scotland is divided into three nations - the excluded, the insecure and the settled. Most Scots are held to inhabit an insecure Scotland where many have recent experience of low pay and unemployment, families are fearful for the future and some are close to slipping into poverty.

As well as issuing a consultation paper on Social Exclusion in Scotland the Secretary of State has announced his intention of establishing a social exclusion network within the responsibility of Lord Sewel.

CoSLA is in the process of setting up a member/officer task group to consider CoSLA's response to the consultation papers on Social Exclusion and a Healthier Scotland and take forward the agenda over the coming months. Social Exclusion will come under the Strategy Forum and a Healthier Scotland will come under the Social Affairs Forum. CoSLA is looking for some degree of cross membership and close working relations between the two groups. Councillor Helen Angus has been nominated by Angus Council to serve on both member/officer task groups.

(a) Social Inclusion - The Contribution of Local Government embracing the Perspective of the CoSLA Social Welfare Task Group

The Social Welfare Task Group established under the CoSLA Social Affairs Forum has proposed a core partnership with Central Government on social inclusion. Although local government will be able to make an important contribution to the two Scottish Office initiatives referred to above, an opportunity also exists for local government to develop a strategic partnership with the Scottish Office and with the new Scottish Parliament around the concept of 'social

inclusion'. The democratic legitimacy of local authorities results in them being uniquely placed to provide local leadership and governance in promoting social inclusion and developing networks and partnerships with statutory, voluntary and private sector agencies, local communities and individual citizens.

Social inclusion should be based on a concept of citizenship which confers social, economic and political rights. The responsibilities of citizens to society should flow from these rights being confirmed for all. The aim must be to promote hope, social confidence, self esteem and self respect in all citizens and healthier and safer communities.

For much of Scotland's land area rural problems of isolation and distance from services and employment will be of particular relevance to the Social Inclusion agenda.

The role of local government and its guiding principles could be centred on promoting social inclusion and social inclusion could become a corporate priority for local authorities. A broad range of strategic and local partnerships involving the relevant stakeholders will be essential in the process of building social inclusion which takes account of a complex range of social and economic relationships. This is consistent with the approach of the recent Scottish Office/CoSLA documentation on Community Planning.

Although the approach taken within each local authority will vary, key principles such as participation, access, equity, local solutions and partnership could be set down. A key issue for the central government/local government partnership will be how to reconcile national standards with local circumstances and responsibilities.

It is worth noting that Scottish local government is unique in that it has a corporate responsibility under the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 to promote social welfare by "making available advice, guidance and assistance on such a scale as may be appropriate for their area". It is crucial that this duty does not become narrowly focused on a 'residual welfare' role but that the promotion of 'social welfare or inclusion' is a guiding principle of public activity which is reflected in plans and strategic agreements and alliances.

At a service level Community Care Plans, Children Services Plans, Housing Plans and strategic agreements could have social inclusion as a key objective. The principle is no less relevant however for education, leisure and recreation services, cultural services, etc. As a corporate priority social inclusion provides a basis for developing horizontal linkages within local authorities and also for a 'managing through internal and external networks' approach by local government.

The social inclusion debate must therefore adopt both a client based and geographic/area based approach.

**(b) Draft Response to Scottish Office Consultation Paper -
"Social Exclusion"**

A draft response to this consultation paper is attached as an appendix to this report.

3. PROPOSAL

It is proposed that the broad approach set out in this report is adopted as the basis for developing a workplan for the Social Policy Sub-Committee in the coming period. This workplan would identify vulnerable groups in different communities and settings, the areas of social and economic activity from which they may be excluded and explore appropriate responses within corporate strategies and partnerships.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report but there are financial issues and policy led budgeting issues which will arise in due course.

5. CONSULTATION

All Chief Officers have been given a copy of this report for further comment with a view to submitting the report to the meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee on 24 March.

A B Watson
Chief Executive

W B Robertson
Director of Social Work

19 March 1998

Note: The undernoted background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

Social Exclusion in Scotland - A Consultation Paper - The Scottish Office

Three Nations - Social Exclusion in Scotland - The Scottish Council Foundation

E:WDS/Reports/Social Inclusion

APPENDIX

SCOTTISH OFFICE CONSULTATION PAPER "SOCIAL EXCLUSION"

DRAFT RESPONSE BY ANGUS COUNCIL

Interpretation and General Comments

Angus Council welcomes the consultation paper on 'Social Exclusion in Scotland' and the consultation document 'Working Together for a Healthier Scotland' as well as the establishment of a social exclusion network within the responsibility of Lord Sewel. We note the statement of the Secretary of State for Scotland that there will be a distinctive Scottish approach to dealing with the problems of low educational achievements, poor housing, unemployment and ill health and that £23 million will be spent on out-of-hours learning projects to tackle exclusion from educational opportunity.

Angus will be committed to playing a full role in the member/officer groups established by CoSLA on 'Social Exclusion' and 'Healthier Scotland' and we strongly support the view that these two initiatives should have strong horizontal linkages.

A recent report by the Scottish Council Foundation has suggested that Scotland is divided into three nations - the excluded, the insecure and the settled. Most Scots are held to inhabit an insecure Scotland where many have recent experience of low pay and unemployment, families are fearful for the future and some are close to slipping into poverty. Angus would support the view of the Foundation that it will prove counterproductive to take too narrow an approach which defines a limited section of society as 'excluded' and devises a limited range of heavily targeted policy instruments to address their problems. It is suggested that the concept of 'social inclusion' should be promoted which links and overarches a strategic approach to 'exclusion' and 'health'.

Angus would welcome the development of strategic partnerships between the Scottish Office and the new Scottish Parliament with local government around the concept of 'social inclusion'. Local authorities are uniquely placed to provide local leadership and governance in promoting social inclusion and developing local networks and partnerships with statutory, voluntary and private sector agencies, local communities and individual citizens. Although the approach taken within each authority would vary, key principles such as participation, access, equity, local solutions and partnership could be set down. A key issue for the central government/local government partnership would be how to apply national standards within local circumstances and responsibilities.

It is worth noting that Scottish local government is unique in the UK in that it has a corporate responsibility to promote 'social welfare'. It is crucial that this duty does not become narrowly focused on a 'residual welfare' role but that the promotion of 'social welfare' or 'inclusion' is a guiding principle of public activity which is reflected in plans and strategic agreement and alliances.

Within this approach social inclusion would confer social, economic and political rights and responsibilities aimed at promoting hope, social confidence, self esteem and self respect in all citizens and healthier, safer and more cohesive communities.

Angus Council welcomes and recognises the value of many new initiatives forthcoming from Government. The Council would however urge the Government to recognise and the horizontal linkages between these initiatives and ensure that appropriate dialogue takes place between different Government Departments.

Examples of important Government initiatives following into the category include:-

- (a) Healthier Scotland;
- (b) Social Exclusion;
- (c) Local Agenda 21;
- (d) Welfare to Work;
- (e) The Children Act;
- (f) Community Planning.
- (g) Care in the Community.

It is particularly important for Government to compliment these strategies and, in particular, the economic activities, with a commitment to development and deliver an Employment Policy.

Paragraph 22

Angus is of the view that long term unemployment, low pay and inadequate income in retirement are crucial issues which must be tackled if social exclusion is to be prevented. The strategy for inclusion must focus on child poverty, the retired poor, disabled and the long term unemployed. The strategy should also recognise that the concentration and combination of poverty and other social and economic factors renders some communities particularly vulnerable to exclusion both in urban and rural settings.

Paragraph 23

In addition to the groups identified in the consultation paper, Angus Council suggests the following groups be included in the 'fast track' groupings.

(a) Children in Need

There is an acute awareness of the cycle of family problems and breakdown which all too often result from children becoming "looked after" and accommodated by local authorities. It is also recognised that a preventative strategy would produce better outcomes for vulnerable children and families. The Children (Scotland) Act provides a framework for a coherent and co-ordinated approach to securing better outcomes for children in need. Specifically, existing Early Years initiatives, coupled with Raising Standards in Schools, are critically important elements in breaking the cycle of deprivation

with a view to greater social inclusion of the current generation of children when they reach adulthood. The Council is fully committed to these initiatives and have a declared intent of significantly increasing levels of literacy and numeracy. We are also committed to addressing child poverty, child care (including pre-fives provision) and parenting skills as part of a comprehensive package for children.

(b) Adults with Literacy Problems

While it is right and proper to devote resources to preventative strategies in the early years, and policy of Social Inclusion must address the needs of adults who have very low literacy levels. Through the Community Education Service much good locally based Adult Basic Education takes place. However, this is one area of Council activity which is especially vulnerable when budget reductions are imposed.

(c) Long-Term Unemployed Over 25

This group is in danger of being overlooked with the priority currently being given to current initiatives. A strategy which successfully addresses their need would be of immense benefit in achieving a comprehensive approach to Social Inclusion.

Paragraph 24

Although at a very early stage, Angus has identified 'social inclusion' as a corporate priority under the Social Policy Sub-Committee of the Policy and Resources Committee. Partnerships and alliances are being developed with the Health Boards and Trusts, Scottish Homes, local colleges, universities and the LEC which will facilitate the local linking of social, health and economic strategies with education and training opportunities. Within Angus Council millennium targets such as a 'Citizens Charter for 2000' and Care 2000 are being considered which focus on social inclusion and link health and welfare issues. Plans and strategic agreements will focus on social inclusion.

Paragraph 25

Angus is strongly of the view that a Central/Local Government partnership is the key to this over-arching strategy which should be based on social inclusion. This would allow the development of coherent local approaches and solutions within a national policy framework.

Paragraph 26

Angus would advocate and support policies which extends the 'New Deal' to the long term unemployed and links this initiative to the management of demand within the economy and the creation of sustainable employment opportunities. We would advocate programmes which focus on parenting as well as early learning and an integrated approach to early years strategies. We also believe it is essential to link health and welfare strategies more coherently with more emphasis on primary care and social inclusion.

Paragraph 27

Policies to prevent social exclusion in the future must be focused on achieving a more cohesive Scotland where citizens are empowered to participate in social, economic and political activities. Many children grow up in households living in poverty. Many adults, especially males, are excluded from work and many retired people and people unable to work have inadequate incomes. Inequalities in society particularly in income and wealth are greater today than for generations. These issues must be addressed if social exclusion is to be prevented.

Paragraph 28

As suggested above a Central/Local Government partnership could establish a framework for implementing national policies and standards within local circumstances and different communities. Outcomes, targets and standards could then be set which would be addressed in flexible approaches by local partnerships within different communities.

Paragraph 29

Angus would give a very high priority to policies which promote inclusion and has set out above the approach which we would advocate.

Paragraphs 30/31

As with the previous question Angus believes that policies focused on social inclusion, on reducing poverty and inequality and promoting health should be integrated locally with education, training, housing, economic development, safer communities, strategies etc. Local authorities are uniquely placed to lead and co-ordinate such an approach.

Paragraph 32

As set out above Angus would strongly support a core Central/Local Government partnership which links national and local initiatives and draws in non-governmental bodies, the voluntary sector and the private sector.

Paragraph 33

A broad engagement with and empowerment of citizens and communities is essential to the process of building social inclusion and a more cohesive society. Consultation mechanisms are already in place or are being developed by local authorities within a 'strategic' local governance and community planning approach which could readily be adapted to focus on vulnerable or excluded individuals, groups and communities.

Paragraph 35

Although at a very early stage, Angus has identified 'social inclusion' as a corporate priority under the Social Policy Sub-Committee of the Policy and Resources Committee. Partnerships and alliances are being developed with the Health Boards and Trusts, Scottish Homes, local colleges, universities and the LEC which will

facilitate the local linking of social, environmental, health and economic strategies with education and training opportunities. Within Angus Council millennium targets such as a 'Citizens Charter for 2000' and Care 2000 are being considered which focus on social inclusion and link health and welfare issues. Plans and strategic agreements will focus on social inclusion.

The Social Policy Sub-Group of the Policy and Resources Committee will systematically address the position of vulnerable groups in Angus in different settings and communities, how corporately we can promote their inclusion in social and economic activities and with other agencies how local partnerships can address these issues.

To deal with issues of social inclusion, Councils and Government will need to consider reprioritising existing expenditure to reflect the needs of the excluded and those vulnerable to exclusion.

