

ANGUS COUNCIL

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 23 JUNE 1998

Report by Chief Executive

Best Value - Departmental 1998/99 Proposals

ABSTRACT

This report details an implementation plan for two Best Value Service Areas:

- (1) Communications, particularly with Community Councils, and
- (2) Marketing and promotion as part of the Council's Economic Development functions.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee should approve: -

- (1) the proposed programme for review of the promotion of good communications with Community Councils;
- (2) The proposed programme for review of the marketing and promotion aspects of Economic Development.

2. BACKGROUND

The Council, under its Best Value Implementation Plan, agreed that each department should: -

- (1) bring forward a proposal by this Committee cycle to provide a Best Value project in respect of at least one area of departmental operations to be implemented as of April 1999;
- (2) Bring forward a plan to review all services within each Department under the Best Value proposals within the next 5-year cycle. (Report 504/98 refers).

3. DETAILS

Community Councils

The Chief Executive's Department is principally responsible for corporate contact with Community Councils of which there are some 27

active in the area. Community Councils were established under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 with the principal aim of ascertaining, co-ordinating and expressing to the Council and Public Authorities, the views of the Communities that they represent. Naturally, Community Councils regularly contact other Council departments and in turn send information regarding specific activities, but the principal corporate communication with the Council is through the Chief Executive's Department.

It is proposed that when carrying out a review all the departments and other public bodies should be contacted as well as Community Councils themselves, to ascertain their views as to general communication with the Council and its departments and the way in which information from the Community Councils is circulated both to Councillors and to departments.

The present Code of Guidance of Writing to the Council for Community Councils is Annexation 1.

Economic Development- Marketing and Promotion

The Chief Executive's Department is now also responsible for Economic Development that is seen as a key corporate activity. The Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act reinforced the Council's role in the promotion of economic development. Marketing and Promotion are the important up-front aspect of this service and it is essential that the Council's resources in these areas be used most effectively.

The service has important external aspects as well as contacts across the whole range of internal departments and the review will therefore again be of a corporate nature. The objective of the review will be to ensure that the Council is employing the most effective means of marketing and promotion of Angus in the widest sense.

4. **METHODOLOGY**

Community Councils

So far as the improvement of communications is concerned, it should also be noted that the Council is committed to a review of the present Community Council Administrative Scheme. Part of this review aims at ensuring more effective working with Community Councils in the area.

As members will be aware, Best Value aims to ensure a system of continuous improvement of all Local Authority operations with the objective of improving the effectiveness of its services, taking into account the views of service users. As the review of Community Council Administrative Scheme is due to take place over the next year, it would

seem practicable to carry out a specific review of communications with the Community Councils.

The proposals for a Best Value review of Community Council communications is for a phased improvement project as follows: -

Phase 1 -Consultation The objective would be to have a survey of views from all Community Councils in the area, giving an Angus-wide priority listing for possible improvements in communications.

Phase 2- Assessment of the results.

Phase 3 proposals would be considered for the 1998/99-budget cycle under Community Council Development budget, if such budgetary consideration were required.

Phase 4- Implementation.

It is anticipated that the review would commence in July and changes would be implemented as from June 1999.

Economic Development- A similar four-phase programme would be adopted, but the objective of the first phase would naturally be to have views on possible improvements to the promotion and marketing system, both from internal and external stakeholders, within and outwith Angus. It would be important to obtain views of outside agencies, companies etc., as to the effectiveness of the Angus marketing and promotion.

So as to avoid an overload in terms of the review process it is proposed that this should not begin until the last quarter of the financial year, possibly January 1999. The review will involve extensive consultation and the implementation phase is not likely to occur therefore until well into the financial year 1999/2000, possibly by December 1999.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The Council is committed to the achievement of Best Value and communication with Community Councils is seen as a vital link in the Council's role and in terms of its corporate themes and corporate priorities to promote the image of Angus. With regard to Economic Development, the Council is equally committed in terms of its Key Themes and under Corporate Priorities to the promotion of Economic Development. It is therefore vital that these activities are reviewed and that they are consistent with Best Value principles.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

It is not possible to quantify the financial implications of the initial studies at this stage, but the intention would be to accommodate any proposals for better communications with Community Councils under the

Community Council budget. With regard to promotion and marketing, the cost of the initial consultation phase is likely to be contained within the promotion and marketing budget. However, it is not possible to say at this stage, pending the outcome of consultation and assessment, to say what the eventual financial implications of implementation of any proposals will be.

8. CONSULTATION

Consultation has been undertaken with all Departments.

Note: No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied upon to any material extent in preparing this paper.

A B Watson
Chief Executive

IR/YEG

18 May 1998

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ANGUS COUNCIL

COMMUNITY COUNCILS

CODE OF GUIDANCE ON WRITING TO THE COUNCIL

This is the code of guidance on Writing to the Council referred to in Section 25 of the Angus Council Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils scheme. When Community councils write to Angus Council the following guidance should be followed:-

1. Copies of Minutes of Community Council (CC) meetings should be sent to the Chief Executive, The Cross, Forfar, DD8 1BX for the attention of the Community Council Contact Officer.
2. There is a separate system with regard to Planning Applications. Contact the Planning Department, St James House, St James Road, Forfar regarding these. Persons nominated by the Community Council should advise the Planning Economic Development and Transport Service of the name, address and telephone of the Planning Application Contract.
3. It is important to keep the local Angus Council member informed about CC concerns. Angus Councillors should be seen as the main route for major matters of concern, other than where a specific system is laid down e.g. in respect of planning applications etc.
4. Action will not necessarily be taken on the basis of a CC sending in minutes to the Chief Executive i.e. The Chief Executive's service will not contact other services, simply because there is a reference in the minutes about any actions or lack of action.

In cases of serious complaint on particular issues the Chief Executive's services may act on a reference in a minute of a Community Council.

However, in the main, if a CC requires action on a particular subject then a separate letter should be sent to the Chief Executive's service or to the Council service most directly concerned with the service in respect of which there is either a request, a query or a complaint. A list of Council contact points is contained in the Council's FACTBANK, copies of which are circulated to all Community Councils.

5. In determining which department to raise a matter with, the following points should be borne in mind by CCs:-
 - (i) If a matter concerns only one service e.g. a complaint in a particular area about dog fouling, say, then the matter should be taken up with the appropriate local area office of the service.

- (ii) If a matter concerns only one service, that service should respond in writing to the Community Council Secretary detailing the action to be taken, given that the matter can be dealt with within existing resources or comes within existing policies. No information need be passed on routine matters to the Chief Executive.
- (iii) If the matter cannot be dealt with within existing resources or would cause undue demands on resources and requires, in the view of the Director of the Service, further action to be taken, the Director should write to the CC confirming this view. The Director will also at this stage send a copy of any response to the Chief Executive.
- (iv) Equally, if, in the view of the Director, the matter cannot be dealt with by the specific service, either because it is against Council policy, or would, in the Directors view, be impractical, etc., then the Director should write to the CC with these views and a copy should be sent to the Chief Executive.
- (v) Where a matter concerns:-
 - (a) Constitution of a CC.
 - (b) Election of CCs (i.e. the overall electoral system and not the procedure adopted at a specific election).
 - (c) Funding of CCs.
 - (d) Amendments to areas of CCs or change of existing divisions.
 - (e) Formation of a new CC.
 - (f) Complaint re Statutory code e.g. Planning applications.
 - (g) A query or complaint already referred to a particular service, and the service has not responded within a reasonable period or the response is challenged by the CC.
 - (h) A query with regard to the application of this advice, or
 - (i) Where the service to which a query or complaint relates is uncertain, or where there may be more than one service involved, e.g. a dispute over a right of way, then the Chief Executive's Department should be the service to which any letter should be addressed in the first instance.

Please note that it is advisable to write to individual services about individual issues rather than include a series of items on a variety of topics to one service and ask that service to pass them on to other services.

6. All services, in responding to CCs, will bear in mind the interests of local members and a copy of any response on service issues should be sent to the local member at the same time as it is sent to the CC.

Services will seek to respond within a reasonable time to CCs, bearing in mind the overall demands on resource.

If a substantive response to a query or complaint cannot be given within a period of 20 working days, the service should give an interim response indicating the steps being taken and an indication of the time period within which a substantive response may be sent.

