

**REPORT TO:** CITY GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 23 JUNE 2025

**REPORT ON:** IMPROVING SERVICES THROUGH LISTENING TO CUSTOMERS AND SERVICE USERS

**REPORT BY:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE

**REPORT NO:** 184-2025

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To highlight improvements which have been made to Council services as a result of listening to the views of customers and service users over the past year.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Committee:

- a note the content of this report;
- b agree that highlights from the report, as set out in Appendix 1, are published on the 'we listened, we acted' page of the Council's website; and
- c encourage services to maintain their efforts to listen to and respond to feedback, as demonstrated in Appendix 2, and to identify any further customers who should be consulted with a view to ensuring that services continue to be improved in response to the views of users.

**3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications arising from the agreement of this report.

**4. LISTENING TO CUSTOMERS AND SERVICE USERS**

- 4.1 The Council uses a wide range of methods to gather feedback from those who use its services, including:
  - surveys and feedback forms;
  - focus groups;
  - public consultations;
  - involvement of users in planning new services and facilities;
  - meetings with representative groups (e.g. tenants, carers, parents, people with disabilities);
  - meetings with partners; and
  - analysis of individual complaints, comments, and suggestions.
- 4.2 This report gives examples of how this feedback has been used in the past year to improve services, demonstrating that the Council listens to, learns from and acts on feedback received from whatever source.
- 4.3 As in the past fifteen years, the Chief Executive's Service asked 'customer facing' services to identify any changes made in response to the views of customers and service users. The detailed returns set out in Appendix 2 to this report continue to demonstrate a commitment to making improvements through listening.
- 4.4 The Council publicises examples of using customer feedback through a "we listened, we acted" page on its website. Highlights from this report, grouped into themes, are set out in Appendix 1 and it is proposed that these continue to be published on the "we listened, we acted" page.

- 4.5 The improvements highlighted in Appendix 1, and the many more which are set out in detail in Appendix 2, illustrate the value of listening to the views of service users. It is recommended that services should maintain their efforts to do this with a view to achieving continuous improvement.
- 4.6 The regular reports on complaints which are submitted to the Scrutiny Committee give further evidence of how customer feedback is used to identify service improvements, which in that case aim to learn from complaints and prevent the same issues recurring.

## **5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 This report has been subject to the Pre-IIA Screening Tool and does not make any recommendations for change to strategy, policy, procedures, services, or funding and so has not been subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment. An appropriate senior manager has reviewed and agreed with this assessment.
- 5.2 Equalities should be considered in the planning, delivery, and monitoring of all services, so customer satisfaction research should aim to capture the views of those from protected characteristic groups. Where possible, consultation should aim to capture the views of people who do not currently use services, as well as those who do and services should maintain their efforts to reach as many citizens as possible through consultation and other initiatives to capture the views of the public.

## **6. CONSULTATIONS**

The Council Leadership Team were consulted in the preparation of this report.

## **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

GREGORY COLGAN  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

9 JUNE 2025

ANDREA CALDER  
HEAD OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S SERVICES

## HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE WEBSITE



In developing the Council's 2024-2030 BSL Plan, extensive engagement and consultation took place. The process also benefitted from input from local deaf children and young people from Craigie High School and Claypotts Castle Primary School. BSL Stakeholder events were held across the city ensuring the voices of local people with lived experience were provided with the opportunity to help shape the plan. Working in this way, has greatly improved engagement and partnership working with the deaf community and increased their involvement in shaping policies and services as well as increasing their awareness of available supports and resources to meet their needs.

Communities are routinely consulted on a range of community priorities, and the number of Dundee citizens contributing to local community plan outcomes increased by 39% between 2023/24 and 2024/25. A six-week consultation process was undertaken during the planning of Drumgeith Community Campus. Before any final decisions were taken, it was essential that the Council understood what the plans would mean for users and the wider community. Original plans included a proposal to relocate all services from four facilities: The Hub Library & Community Facilities; Whitfield Community Library; Douglas Community Centre & Library; and Douglas Sports Centre. The outcome of the consultation resulted in Douglas Community Centre remaining open on its existing site.

Parents of pupils at St Joseph's Primary School wanted the children to experience more educational trips out with school. Following a process of consultation, gathering feedback from parents and from discussions with the children, every class has now had an educational trip in connection with planned learning and teaching. Parents have fed back that they are very happy.

Examples of streamlining services, both to improve the customer experience and make better use of Council resources through more efficient and co-ordinated processes, include a new digitised football pitch calling off system, Plotbox: a new burials IT system, and a GIS system for the memorial bench booking process. Carers of adults with a learning disability expressed a preference for digital surveys rather than paper-based engagement processes. Following further consultation, digital surveys were created and the process of gaining feedback was streamlined. As a result, carers feel more engaged and listened to.

In Lochee, families stated they were struggling with keeping their families busy and entertained during the holidays due to financial pressures. The rising cost of living meant that parents could not afford the kinds of leisure pursuits they may have participated in with their families in previous years. The Community Empowerment Team and Community Health Team worked together in partnership with What Matters to You and the Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP) subgroup to access funding for weekly family trips. These were organised across the ward for the first five weeks of the school holidays with 44 families attending. Feedback from those who participated was extremely positive.

Young people accessing treatment for sexual health services expressed concerns about having to visit Ninewells sexual health clinic to get treatment. Their concerns were around confidentiality, anonymity, and travel, and having to repeat their stories due to two different electronic patient record systems being accessed. As a result of those concerns, we have secured the National Sexual Health Patient (NASH) record system for use in drop-in. This is shared with Tayside Sexual and Reproductive Health Service (TSRHS). NASH will enable nursing staff to provide treatment for young people and their partners, non-medical prescribing (NMP) training for senior sexual health nurses is now in place meaning NMPs can prescribe and dispense medications out with Patient Group Direction (PGD) which also helps reduce the young person's journey across services.

Citizen feedback on the annual Council Tax leaflet has resulted in changes to make it easier to understand. Every household in Dundee received an updated leaflet which includes a glossary of terms to explain some of the statutory information contained within it.

Outreach work in Dallfield and Tulloch Courts identified concerns about community safety and other housing issues. Residents felt there needed to be a communal safe space where people could come together and meet with service providers. Communities, Housing, Community Safety and Police worked with residents to get the lounge refurbished and turned into a space which can be used by residents and by service providers looking to do outreach with residents.

Feedback was gathered from adult learners attending English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes. Learners requested more learning sessions and expressed a preference for face-to-face group learning rather than online learning. Learners also asked to focus on understanding local accents. A gap in service provision was identified for elderly ESOL learners, particularly those from Ukraine. External funding now enables the Communities Service to provide extra learning sessions, including for asylum seekers. Two new projects ("Understanding Dundonian" Conversation Cafe and "Talk Dundee" Workshop) were set up to support ESOL learners' integration into the city. The Communities Service established a targeted group for ESOL learners 60 years and older and supported the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain to start a Ukrainian Club for elderly Ukrainians living in Dundee.

Customers of the Council's Connect Services made it clear they preferred venues where they could see an adviser face to face and get assistance with benefit, debt, and energy enquiries as well as form filling. As a result, the service is now delivering face to face community-based services from 11 venues across the city. Increasingly, customers are asking to see an adviser face to face in their own community venues.

The City Centre Strategic Investment Plan highlighted the need for improved lighting solutions in the city centre to enhance connectivity, safety, and attractiveness. This led to the creation of a "Dundee City Centre Lighting Strategy," which involved extensive public engagement both online and through a series of "Night Walks" with stakeholders. Key suggestions from this engagement were incorporated into the final report including illuminating heritage buildings at key junctions; lighting culturally and historically significant buildings across the city; ensuring a base level of illumination at concealed entrances; reviewing existing lighting to improve wayfinding and adding visual interest through interactive lighting or light art on major travel routes.

Customers voiced concerns regarding other aspects of their home/tenancy/rent when speaking to the Rent Collection Team. In response, the team arranged regular meetings with Housing colleagues to build more collaborative working for the benefit of our tenants. Continued collaboration across the sector, including with Housing Associations is supporting efforts to encourage rent payments, prevent home loss and support tenants faced with rent arrears or financial difficulties.

The Waste Service received feedback that the decals on the communal bins didn't provide enough information as to what should be placed into each bin. As a result, the decals were updated and are now more pictorial. QR codes that link to the "what happens to your waste" section of the council website have also been added. This aids householder understanding of the recycling process.

Following queries from citizens about some behaviour on our social media platforms, a set of house rules have been developed and published. The house rules set out how the Council expects people to interact on these platforms and what actions might be taken in response to unacceptable behaviour.

Feedback from parents/carers and members of school staff around all aspects relating to Additional Support Needs (ASN) travel assistance highlighted a need to address areas within this service. Through conversations with colleagues and service users, the service identified where barriers to the services were and made amendments as appropriate. As a result, the service receives more phone calls/emails for queries, evidencing that contact details are more visible and service users have commented that they can find the information they require online quicker.

## IMPROVEMENTS MADE AS A RESULT OF CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

### 1. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S SERVICE

#### 1.1 Communications

##### 1.1.1 Council Tax Leaflet

Following feedback from members of the public, the annual Council Tax leaflet changed to make it easier to understand. This included providing a glossary of terms to explain some of the statutory information contained within it. This leaflet is sent to every household in Dundee.

##### 1.1.2 Flooding Leaflet

During Storm Babet, leaflets were provided to households affected by flooding. The leaflets provided advice and signposting to sources of support. Feedback was received that the information would have been more beneficial if the leaflet had been distributed prior to the storm. A new leaflet has now been produced and distributed to households in areas which are prone to flooding, helping people to take actions in advance of any severe weather.

##### 1.1.3 Social Media House Rules

Following queries from citizens about some behaviour on our social media platforms, a set of house rules have been developed and published. The house rules set out how the Council expects people to interact on these platforms and what actions might be taken in response to unacceptable behaviour.

#### 1.2 Equality and Diversity

##### 1.2.1 Faith Covenant

Following the signing of Faith Covenant between Dundee City Council and Faith Communities in November 2023, the Council has welcomed the opportunity to work with the established Faith Forum in the delivery of services and social action on an equal basis. This has led to the Council's commitment to:

- building relationships and trust with faith groups;
- adopting strategies for the engagement of faith communities in consultation exercises;
- encouraging faith groups and their members to be involved in the reshaping and redesign of Council services;
- establishing clear guidelines around funding; and
- sharing training and learning opportunities with faith organisations.

The Council's Education Service has established a working group whereby the Director of Children's & Family Service and the Head of Education meet with Faith Leaders to explore how Faith is taught in schools in the City, allowing issues of concern to be addressed and a relevant input into teaching and practices to be adopted. Faith Leaders also engaged with the City's Head Teachers in a session in May.

##### 1.2.2 Development of the BSL Plan

In developing the Council's 2024-2030 BSL Plan, extensive engagement and consultation took place involving both local and national partners, including, the Scottish Government, the British Deaf Association (BDA), Deaf Links, the Council's Corporate Equality & Diversity Steering Group, BSL users from our local deaf community and Northeast Sensory Services (NESS). The process also benefitted from input from local deaf children and young people from Craigie High School and Claypotts Castle Primary School. BSL Stakeholder events were held across the city with good attendance from users at each event, ensuring the voices of local people with lived experience were provided with the opportunity to help shape the plan. Ongoing

engagement with BSL users will take place at least six-monthly throughout the course of the plan. This means that all actions and commitments within the plan have been shaped by those with direct lived experience of BSL to assist them in meeting their needs and priorities. Working in this way, has significantly improved engagement and partnership working with the deaf community across the city and increased their involvement in shaping appropriate policies and service delivery as well as increased their awareness of available supports and resources to meet their needs.

A key example of service improvement as a result, has been the updating and development of the Council's website with increasing levels of information and supports available in BSL

### **1.2.3 Complaints**

Parents and carers of residents with learning disabilities at the White Top Centre requested an easy-to-understand poster that would explain the council's complaints process, including how to make a complaint and what they can expect when they make a complaint. We now have an A4 poster explaining our complaints process in straightforward steps, which can be shared with any service across the council where service users would find it beneficial. It makes our complaints process more accessible and easier to understand for all citizens.

Feedback from the White Top Centre was: "We had positive feedback from external visitors saying the poster was clear/concise, user friendly and accessible. We now have the poster on display on our information board, thank you."

## **2. CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

### **2.1 St John's RC High School**

The school has actively improved opportunities for learners to provide feedback on their experiences. Opportunities to feedback range from online Forms to Head Teacher Focus Groups, from classroom feedback directly to teachers to direct discussions with learners during professional support visits (observations of learning). The school has also introduced opportunities for learners to support school improvement via participatory budgeting.

Learners wanted more toilet provision, improved social areas and ways of celebrating the diversity within the school community. The school has worked closely with the local authority to improve access to toilets within the school, including the building of new toilets in three locations within the school. The purchase of additional classrooms has freed up an area of the school which will be redesigned to provide a social area (and flexible learning space) for learners over the coming months. Learners are engaging and supporting this, and the current options being voted on through the participatory budgeting process focus on ensuring these areas are fit for purpose.

Through the Rights Respecting School Group, the school held a very successful 'Festival of Culture' to celebrate its diversity within "The Family of St John's." This event included stalls showcasing the history, geography, food, and culture of countries led by learners who have connections from places as diverse as Lithuania, Poland, Nigeria, Syria, Ukraine, India, the Philippines, and the Home Nations.

As a result, the school is seeing evidence of improvements in satisfaction rates across a number of areas. The school hopes to achieve the Silver Rights Respecting School Award over the coming weeks. We also received very positive feedback from His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) of Education regarding our work on improving the learner voice, with the HMI considering this a strength of the school.

### **2.2 ASN Travel Assistance**

Feedback from parents/carers and members of school staff around all aspects relating to ASN Travel Assistance highlighted a need to address areas within this service. Through conversations with colleagues and service users, the service identified where barriers to the services were and made amendments as appropriate.

As a result of this feedback, the wording within policy documentation was simplified and a step-by-step process for applicants to follow, particularly in situations when they wished to challenge decisions. Decision/outcome letters were shortened and matched with policy references to ensure complex decisions are now explained fully. This has helped shorten timescales from application submission, giving the service more time to prepare routes and budgets for ASN Transport. The Independent Travel Programme has been flagged within schools as an alternative to providing Travel Assistance to appropriate individuals who are able to travel independently and just need to build confidence when travelling to and from home to school with their peers.

The Council's website pages have been updated to reflect the new paperwork, and the service is more visible online within the "search" facility. As a result, the service receives more phone calls/emails for queries, evidencing that contact details are more visible and service users have commented that they can find the information they require online quicker.

### **2.3 St Joseph's Primary School**

Parents wanted pupils to experience more educational trips out with school. The school embarked on a process of consultation through Parent Council discussion and meetings, gathering feedback from parents via parent evening surveys and from discussions with the children. Every class has now had an educational trip in connection with planned learning and teaching. A whole school trip to Active Kids took place in April. Every child will experience a class and whole school trip in session 2024/25. Parents have fed back that they are very happy, through exit surveys and Parent Council meeting minutes.

## **3. CITY DEVELOPMENT**

### **3.1 Accessibility for Pedestrians and Cyclists**

#### **3.1.1 Secure Cycle Storage at Lansdowne Court**

The need for cycle storage was first recognised by the residents of Lansdowne Court. Dundee City Council collaborated closely with the residents to launch a large-scale cycle storage facility, accommodating 25 standard cycles and 2 adapted cycles (such as trikes). The residents played a crucial role in advancing the project, contributing to decisions on the size, specifications, and colours of the unit, which harmonise with the multi storey building's cladding and balconies.

#### **3.1.2 City Centre Lighting Strategy**

The City Centre Strategic Investment Plan highlighted the need for improved lighting solutions in the city centre to enhance connectivity, safety, and attractiveness. This led to the creation of a "Dundee City Centre Lighting Strategy," which involved extensive public engagement both online and through a series of "Night Walks" with stakeholders from Dundee University Student Association, Abertay Students' Association, Dundee Access Group, Dundee Safe Zone and various charities, clubs and youth groups, for example, the Hot Chocolate Trust. Key suggestions from this engagement were incorporated into the final report including illuminating heritage buildings at key junctions; lighting culturally and historically significant buildings across the city; ensuring a base level of illumination at concealed entrances; reviewing existing lighting to improve wayfinding and adding visual interest through interactive lighting or light art on major travel routes.

## **4. CORPORATE SERVICES**

### **4.1 Customer Services & IT**

The service actively seeks feedback from customers, and this can be provided via face-to-face communication, over the telephone, through a range of customer surveys or via complaints.

#### 4.1.1 Customer Services Team

Customers made us aware of the lack of privacy in the Box office for dealing with their face-to-face enquiries. Due to the lack of privacy and listening to staff members/customers, the decision was made to move back into Dundee House into an interview room. A waiting area on the ground floor of Dundee House was introduced so customers can sit and wait if they arrived early for their appointment. An answering machine facility was also introduced to allow customers to leave a message for a call back.

By moving into an interview room, this allowed the level of privacy needed for the customer. Team members have easy sight of their customers, and it's an all-round improved experience for both parties. The voicemail facility has helped reduce the wait time and complaints received from customers.

Customers are no longer commenting on the lack of privacy, and no verbal or written complaints have been received.

#### 4.1.2 Council Advice Services

The Connect Services expanded to delivering face to face services from 11 venues in 2024/25. Customers made it clear they preferred venues where they could see an adviser face to face and get assistance with benefit, debt, and energy enquiries as well as form filling. Although some customers still prefer to use the duty telephone line, increasingly customers are asking to see an adviser face to face in their own community venues.

Some examples of increased engagement in communities include:

- Feedback from Stobswell Community Forum resulted in a firm commitment to continuing coverage of the Stobswell area going forward.
- Customers attending the Linlathen Child Poverty Pathfinder at Brooksbank Centre were looking for more energy advice provision in the area. The Dundee Energy Efficiency Action Project already covered Thursday sessions at the Centre but has now expanded this to test Tuesday sessions as well.
- Co-location of advice within Primary Care has led to a large proportion of new customers accessing advice services. Our feedback mechanisms when seeing patients in GP practices record whether they have sought advice before, why they are attending the service and why they value it. These stigma-free settings allow customers, who hitherto have never accessed advice, to seek advice confidentially in a safe environment.
- In 2024/25 the GP co-location service expanded to take in a further 3 GP surgeries, Ancrum, Ancrum One and Downfield taking the total within situ advisers in Dundee to 13. New service users are accessing advice services within GP surgeries where previously this service did not exist. An Improvement Service report backed this up stating that across Scotland 89% of individuals accessing advice in their GP surgery had not previously sought advice. Cases are dealt with more efficiently with quicker more robust benefit outcomes for customers seeking advice.

#### 4.1.3 Benefit Delivery Team

Stakeholder feedback from customers suggested many were unable to understand their Council Tax bills. The volume of calls increased when new bills are issued for the forthcoming year. As a result:

- Council Tax drop-in sessions were arranged where customers can seek advice on understanding their Council Tax Bill.



- Citizens Access Revenues (Automated Service) has been introduced. This allows customers to report changes online in respect of their Council Tax, sign up to view their account online and update their circumstances.
- The team worked in partnership with the Council Tax Collections Team to review accounts which were due to move into recovery stages, with an aim to prevent customers reaching these stages.
- Case Studies were shared with teams to highlight the importance of clear communications with customers to explain Council Tax and support them to make payments.

Customers now have 24/7 online access. There has been a reduction in the number of accounts progressing to Sheriff Officer and having costs added and the number of upheld complaints dropped in the second half of 2024/25.

#### **4.1.4 Collections Team**

Non-Domestic Rate customers asked for more information to be contained in their invoices and asked to receive them via email rather than post. Electronic billing allows customers to receive bills quicker, contains information about relief and other important customer information as well as clear payment details for the financial year and has links to important information to the customer. As a result, Sales Ledger Invoices and non-domestic rates bills are being received quicker.

#### **4.1.5 Rent Collection Team/Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) Team**

When speaking to the Rent Collection Team, customers voiced concerns regarding other aspects of their home/tenancy/rent. The team arranged regular meetings with Housing colleagues to build more collaborative working for the benefit of our tenants. Continued collaboration across the sector, including with Housing Associations is supporting efforts to encourage rent payments, prevent home loss and support tenants faced with rent arrears or financial difficulties.

Rent Collection staff working within the District Office is building and strengthening relationships and helping to streamline processes to ensure tenants are fully supported. This has resulted in a reduction in serious arrears in cases referred to the Courts. better understanding has led to using alternative methods for rent recovery, long-term arrears cases are settled allowing the customer to gain control of their finances, build their resilience and self-esteem. Decrees granted have fallen from 127 in 2022/23 to 63 in 2024/25 and evictions from 29 to 16. To continue this positive downward trend the rent collection team are introducing a referral at an earlier stage to homeless prevention officers who, with support from tenancy officers, carry out home visits to gain engagement and prevent court enrolment. This will be beneficial for both tenants and the local authority. Relationships between customers and the Rent Collection Team are better and this is encouraging tenants to make contact at an earlier stage. Compliments are being received from customers.

#### **4.1.6 Council Tax Collection Team**

Customers expressed concern with the level of direct deductions being taken from their Universal Credit or other legacy benefits. In some circumstances one or more deductions from benefit was cancelled to allow more disposable income to allow a better standard of living in this cost-of-living crisis. The team worked with the Benefit Delivery team to review accounts which were due to move into recovery stages, with an aim to prevent customers reaching these stages.

Accounts were removed from the sheriff officer's caseload to prevent additional charges and fees being imposed for customers in receipt of benefit. Reduction in the number of accounts progressing to Summary Warrant and incurring a statutory penalty. This has resulted in a reduction in the number of accounts being passed to the sheriff officer for collection resulting in less fees being incurred by the customer.

## **5. HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PARTNERSHIP**

### **5.1 The Corner**

Staff have listened to feedback from young people expressing concerns about the external noise they could hear whilst accessing counselling at the Corner, as well as worries about room temperatures. Investment is being made to redevelop those rooms including sound proofing and providing adequate ventilation for the two counselling rooms to improve the counselling experience for young people. Funding was secured and sound proofing for one of the counselling rooms is in place.

Young people expressed concerns on many occasions regarding the lack of Wi-fi in the Corner drop-in. Poor wi-fi connection also meant feedback could not be robustly collected from young people. On listening to this feedback, a more robust wi-fi connection is now in place.

Young people accessing for sexual health services expressed concerns about having to visit Ninewells sexual health clinic to get treatment for sexually transmitted infections, or sexual health related issues. Young people expressed concerns about confidentiality/anonymity/travel and having to repeat their stories due to two different electronic patient record systems being accessed. As a result of those concerns, we have secured the National Sexual Health Patient (NASH) record system for use in drop-in. This is shared with Tayside Sexual and Reproductive Health Service (TSRHS) and the Corner are further developing their sexual health provision in the drop-in meaning more person-centred care can be delivered. NASH will enable nursing staff to provide asymptomatic treatment for chlamydia for young people and their partners, as well as offering treatments for Thrush/UTIs. Non-medical prescribing (NMP) training for senior sexual health nurses now in place meaning NMPs can prescribe and dispense medications out with Patient Group Direction (PGD) which also helps reduce the young person's journey across services.

After every consultation or support session offered to young people they are given the opportunity to give honest, confidential feedback about the support they received and any other comments they wish to make about the service. This is monitored by admin and reported monthly via clinical governance.

### **5.2 Care Services**

#### **5.2.1 Training and Development in Mangar Camel Lifting Equipment**

Following a complaint from a service user that H&SC team members attending to assist with a fall appeared not to be confident in the use of the equipment. An investigation highlighted a potential issue when new staff were using equipment that is only required in unique situations. Mangar Camel is an emergency lifting cushion which does not get used very often as it only used for bariatric service users. As a result, further refresher training for all staff was undertaken and this repeated every 6 months to ensure all team members skills are kept up-to-date, especially with lifting equipment that is not often required.

#### **5.2.2 Engaging with Carers of Adults with Learning Disabilities**

Carers expressed a preference for digital surveys rather than a paper-based process. Following further consultation, digital surveys were created and the process of gaining feedback was streamlined. As a result, carers feel more engaged and listened to.

## **6. NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES**

### **6.1 Housing and Construction**

#### **6.1.1 Voids Reduction Exercise**

Feedback from discussions with elected members and via the Housing Best Value Review Group led to the implementation of measures to reduce the number of relets. Resources were reallocated from other workstreams to focus on void properties allowing efforts to be channelled to addressing this issue. During 2024/25, a reduction in the number of relets by over 200 properties, resulting in:

- 70% of DCC lets being allocated to homeless households;
- a reduction of 13% of children staying in temporary network flat accommodation; and
- 47% increase in applicants securing permanent accommodation.

#### **6.1.2 Rent Consultation 2024**

The Rent Consultation is important to tenants as it determines the level of rent to be charged in the following financial year, and the Council wishes to hear the views of tenants on the proposed rent increases; The consultation was conducted between November and December 2024. To ensure that as many tenants as possible were able to take part the service used a range of feedback methods:

- Use of the Council's website where all information about the consultation, Housing Revenue Account, contact details, survey link and frequently asked questions are published.
- Dedicated Council social media accounts used to promote participation opportunities and advertise the consultation directly to customers.
- Promotion of the survey using posters in key areas across the city, including Libraries, Sheltered Complexes and Multi Storey Developments.
- Repairs Contact Centre and Customer Service advisers offered the survey questionnaire when contacting or being contacted by tenants over the phone or in person at Dundee House.
- Monthly staff bulletin used to encourage staff, who may also be Council tenants, to participate, whilst also being encouraged to raise awareness of the survey with customers via their day-to-day duties.
- Tenants canvassed by phone who would ordinarily have received a visit from their Tenancy Officer/Assistant, to offer participation opportunities, whilst at the same time carrying out a wellbeing check.
- The Dundee Federation of Tenants' Associations contacted all its members encouraging participation in the Rent Consultation.

The total number of tenants who participated in the consultation this year was 2,073. This equates to a return of 16.5% of the current housing stock, slightly down on last year's return.

### **6.2 Environment**

#### **6.2.1 Recycling**

The Waste Team often come across misconceptions with householders regarding recycling. The service has therefore used this as an opportunity to work with recycling re-processors to

produce a series of short videos that explain "what happens to your waste". These videos outline the recycling process for different commodities and are available on the council website.

The Waste service received feedback that the decals on the communal bins didn't provide enough information as to what should be placed into each bin. As a result, the decals were updated and are now more pictorial. QR codes have also been added that links to the "what happens to your waste" section of the council website. This aids householder understanding of the recycling process.

A grant of nearly £700,000 has been awarded from the Scottish Government's Recycling Improvement Fund to maximise reuse and recycling and carry out site upgrades at the city's two recycling centres at Baldovie and Riverside. This will improve the user experience at both recycling centres.

#### **6.2.2 My Bins APP**

Following the introduction of the My Bins APP in January 2024, the number of users using the app has steadily increased. The waste service continues to use the Bin App to put out both informative messaging and notifications when there is short term service disruption. This is achieved through push notifications and the news feature on the App.

#### **6.2.3 Take Pride**

As part of the Take Pride in Your City initiative 24/25, community clean ups were arranged in Linlathen, Stobswell, City Centre and Kirkton, allowing residents to dispose of household items in skips that were provided. These clean ups included in-depth pre-event walkabouts with community representatives to gather feedback on priorities and adapt works to reflect feedback. One example was in the City Centre where priorities were mapped out by businesses and organisations on a walkabout and then tackled as priorities by the Operations team during the clean-up.

Community Litter Picking Hubs are being rolled out across the city, allowing community groups to volunteer in their neighbourhood. There will be hubs in the East End, the Ferry, Coldside, the West End and Mayfield Wards to support communities to get involved, with further hubs planned across the city.

The new Take Pride in Your City Action Plan was approved at Committee in November 2024. This included a new focus on community engagement and improving the service through responding to data and public feedback. Over the next two years, there will be a renewed emphasis on analysing feedback to inform service improvements, as well as working in partnership with community groups, businesses, sports clubs, and higher education institutions to develop initiatives together to make improvements to local environmental quality.

#### **6.2.4 Biodiversity**

The Environment Service continues to develop biodiversity grasslands and naturalised grasslands in Dundee's parks and greenspaces alongside local people. The service is working with local communities and Friends of Parks groups to develop and care for these areas, with opportunities to become involved in planting and maintenance events in their local greenspaces.

#### **6.2.5 Working with Environment/Horticultural Groups**

Dundee's environmental/horticultural groups find it beneficial to share best practice, highlight their work, and be made aware of initiatives and funding opportunities.

- The Take Pride in Your City monthly bulletin continues to highlight Dundee's projects and encourage participation. In addition, it features relevant articles and links which may benefit

developing community environmental projects. Groups have also been encouraged to attend national networking events. At the end of 2024, the Environment Service hosted a networking event in Camperdown alongside Keep Scotland Beautiful, allowing community groups to come together, share experiences, hear about Council projects, and provide a space for discussion and ideas sharing.

- Community and Friends of Parks are included in the Green Flag Award and Internal Quality Audit process where relevant. This provides opportunities for the Council and these groups to identify improvements, consider how working relationships can be developed and fostered and acts as a vehicle for each party to provide feedback.
- The Countryside Rangers continue to enable practical volunteer work in Dundee's parks and greenspaces by supporting existing volunteer groups, such as Friends of Parks, and responding to requests for volunteering opportunities, for instance from organisations implementing their Corporate and Social Responsibility policies. Bespoke outdoor learning opportunities are also developed in response to requests from schools.
- The Environment Service continues to support requests for growing in local communities. Working with other council colleagues, the Community Allotment Officer assists and provides guidance to enable local people to grow their own fruit and vegetables.
- The Environment Service has been meeting regularly with the Urban Relief Officer to understand data being collected as part of their ongoing public surveys regarding parks and open spaces across Dundee. Once more data is received, there are plans to integrate this feedback into a programme of service improvements as part of the Take Pride Action Plan.

### **6.3 Streamlining Processes**

Neighbourhood Services strives to streamline services where possible, both to improve the customer experience and make better use of Council resources through more efficient and co-ordinated processes.

- The football pitch calling-off process has been digitised to improve the customer experience and make better use of Council resources. This new process was agreed in consultation with football clubs and has now been rolled out, allowing clubs to check whether pitches have been called off and why. This change came about because of feedback from clubs and to align Dundee with other local authorities across Tayside. This new method reduces emails and phone calls relieving pressure on Operations and Customer Services and making a more streamlined experience for service users.
- A new burials IT system, Plotbox, has been developed and rolled out. This streamlines the burials administration process, improving customer experience as well as efficiency for Council staff.
- The memorial bench booking process has faced several challenges in recent years due to limited resources and outdated systems of recording and monitoring requests. This has led to customer complaints in recent years. Over the past year, the development of a more comprehensive system using GIS and spreadsheet data has been developed in response to feedback received and to streamline processes going forward.

### **6.4 Project Consultation**

For all projects of a certain scale and budget, public consultation is carried out as thoroughly as possible. This begins at the design stage where the project officer(s) arrange meetings at a community centre to discuss ideas and residents' aspirations. Consultation is crucial for certain projects to help the department gauge what is required to allow the community to engage in the development of projects and in turn improve, promote, and increase respect for our public open spaces.

### **Recent examples include: -**

- Longhaugh Play Park: A well-attended community event to discuss the project was organised by the Communities Team in collaboration with Environment. This included games for children and in-depth discussions with parents / carers and young people about design options. Feedback was integrated into designs and shaped the materials and equipment chosen.
- Baxter Park Play Park: Initial designs were shared with the community via an on-line survey. Feedback was received regarding the need for additional inclusive play items. As a result, designs and budgets were reconfigured to ensure that the playpark provides further enhanced facilities for disabled children in particular.
- Pitairlie Play Park: As part of the design development of this project, a meeting was held at the Yard Dundee, a nearby play facility for disabled children, young people, and their families. Discussions with disabled young people and their carers highlighted various requirements for inclusive play, particularly the need for enclosure and challenging play opportunities for older disabled children. These ideas were integrated into the design development of Pitairlie Play Park, alongside further public engagement in the area.

## **6.5 Capital investment**

### **6.5.1 Templeton Woods Car Park**

Following comments regarding the poor state of Templeton Woods Car Park, over £100K of investment was made to provide a more stable surface by tarmacking both the entry road and car park itself. Wildflower seed was sown in the areas surrounding the car park and where earth disturbance had taken place.

### **6.5.2 Baxter Park Bowling Green**

As part of the renegotiation of a renewed lease agreement with Baxter Park Bowling Club, the Environment Service removed the overgrown cypress hedge and dilapidated fence and replaced them with an instant hedge and new fence. This will enable the bowling club to maintain both the hedge and the fence in the future.

## **6.6 Communities**

### **6.6.1 Community Consultation**

Communities are routinely consulted on a range of community priorities, and the number of Dundee Citizens contributing to local community plan outcomes increased by 39% between 2023/24 and 2024/25.

A six-week consultation process was undertaken during the planning of Drumgeith Community Campus, the outcome of which resulted in Douglas Community Centre remaining open on its existing site. Before any final decisions were taken, it was essential that the Council understood what the plans would mean for users and the wider community. Original plans included a proposal to relocate all services from four facilities: The Hub Library & Community Facilities; Whitfield Community Library; Douglas Community Centre & Library; and Douglas Sports Centre.

### **6.6.2 Humanitarian Protection**

A survey was conducted in May 2024 to gather data on the experiences and outcomes of people who have been engaged with DCC Humanitarian Protection Support Service for Refugees since 2021. Most people were engaged with education, adult learning, employability, and support services and they were adequately permanently housed. Issues were raised

around access to health service. As a result of this survey a Scottish Refugee Council Duty line has been established to provide additional source of support to resettled people in Dundee.

### 6.6.3 Community Health

The Engage Dundee survey on the cost-of-living crisis was completed by 1181 residents of the city. Findings were shared with a wide range of partners, including the Community Health Advisory Forum (CHAF), which is supported by the Community Health Team. The CHAF were affected in particular by findings that showed most residents were struggling with basic household costs, poor mental health, and social isolation. The CHAF worked with the Community Health Team to organise a city-wide event in November 2024, taking place in Hilltown Community Centre. 84 people attended. A wide range of services provided advice, information, and support around the cost of living. Free soup packs, hot water bottles, gloves and socks were supplied.

- Women in the Maryfield area spoke to the local Community Health Worker about lack of support for those going through the menopause. Women were not being provided with appropriate menopause support, advice, and information within their own communities. Support from Primary Care/ GPs was minimal and tended to be medication. They wished to access peer support to help them share stories and manage symptoms. The Community Health Worker liaised with the HSCP Primary Care Programme Manager to identify solutions with the women and access funding. There is now a weekly menopause cafe where the group have been trained to become "Menopause Mentors" with a view to hosting menopause cafes across the city.
- In Lochee, families stated they were struggling with keeping their families busy and entertained during the holidays due to financial pressures. The rising cost of living meant that parents could not afford the kinds of leisure pursuits they may have participated in with their families in previous years. This puts a strain of family relations and affects the wellbeing of both children and their parents. The Community Empowerment Team and Community Health Team worked together in partnership with What Matters to You and the ADP subgroup to access funding for weekly family trips. These were organised across the ward for the 1st 5 weeks of the school holidays with 44 families attending. Feedback from those who participated was extremely positive.

### 6.6.4 Community Empowerment Team

- Family Empowerment work in Charleston, Kirkton and Whitfield created informal opportunities for families to come together and talk about issues which were important to them. Families valued the informal opportunity to talk amongst each other and to service providers. The formal local Community Planning structures are a barrier to their participation and can be intimidating. Taking a "cafe conversation" approach to local community planning is being piloted in Coldside in Lochee with a view to changing how Local Community Planning Partnerships operate, to become more solution focussed and to bring together a broader range of participants.
- Outreach work in Dallfield and Tulloch Courts identified concerns about community safety and other housing issues. Resident felt there needed to be a communal safe space where people could come together and meet with service providers. Communities, Housing, Community Safety and Police worked with residents to get the lounge refurbished and turned into a space which can be used by residents by also by service providers looking to do outreach with residents.

### 6.6.5 Youth Work

In October last year, the CLD West Youth Work team supported young people from the Lochee Ward to organise focussed engagement with a group of decision makers and funders around what matters to them in their community and about CLD Youth Work. Young people wanted to have their voices heard, build stronger community bonds and to be able support younger people in their community and keep them safe. They wanted support to develop their confidence to

raise their voices on community issues. A positive outcome of this process was that CLD Youth Work worked with What Matters 2U and Columba 1400 to plan a Values Based Residential experience for young people in the Lochee Ward who were keen to continue developing a leadership role within their community. The young people are now being supported by DCC youth workers to develop a project in response to this learning experience.

#### **6.6.6 Adult Learning**

Feedback was gathered from adult learners attending English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Classes through regular learning sessions and guidance sessions and via the Dundee and Angus ESOL Partnership Annual Learner survey (now in its 6th year).

Adult learners requested more learning sessions and expressed a preference for face-to-face group learning rather than online learning. ESOL Learners also asked to focus on understanding local accents. ESOL support targeted toward elderly ESOL learners and for those from Ukraine, was identified as a gap in service provision. External funding was secured to allow the Communities service to offer additional learning sessions, including for a large group of asylum seekers.

Two new projects (“Understanding Dundonian” Conversation Cafe and “Talk Dundee” Workshop) were started to support ESOL learners’ integration into the city. The Communities Service established a targeted group for ESOL learners 60 years and older and supported the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain to start a Ukrainian Club for elderly Ukrainians living in Dundee.