

## ITEM No ...8.....

**REPORT TO:** POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 26 APRIL 2021

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

**REPORT BY:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE

**REPORT NO:** 60-2021

### 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:

- (i) note the contents of this report, and agree that similar reports should continue to be submitted annually.
- (ii) 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.
- (iii) encourage services to maintain their efforts to listen to and respond to feedback, 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

Each service makes provision for any costs of customer consultation within their existing revenue budgets.

### 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 eg tenants, carers, parents and people with disabilities
- meetings with partners
- analysis of individual complaints, comments and suggestions

This report gives examples of how we have used this feedback in the past year to improve services, demonstrating that the Council listens, learns from and acts on feedback received from whatever source.

4.2 As in the past eleven years, the Chief Executive's service asked 'customer facing' services to identify any changes made in the past year as a result of taking opportunities to listen to the views of customers and service users and act on the results. For obvious reasons, there was less scope for direct face-to-face engagement with the public over the past year, but the detailed returns set out in Appendix 2 to this report continue to demonstrate a commitment to making improvements through listening across all Council services.

- 4.3 The Council publicises how customer feedback has been acted upon in the form of 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 are published on the "we listened, we acted" page.
- 4.4 The improvements highlighted in Appendix 1, and the many more which are set out in detail in Appendix 2, illustrate the value of seeking feedback from customers. It is recommended that services should maintain their efforts to do this and seek to identify any further customers who should be consulted or offered opportunities to give their feedback, as well as continuing to respond to comments, complaints, suggestions etc with a view to achieving continuous improvement.
- 4.5 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 to prevent problems recurring.
- 4.6 This report normally also includes an appendix on feedback from surveys carried out by Customer Services with people accessing their services face-to-face or on the telephone. Those surveys were not carried out throughout 2020 due to Dundee House being mainly closed and call handling staff working from home. In the only month for which statistics on call handling are available, the service was rated at 100%.

## **5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 This report has been subject to an assessment of any impacts on Equality and Diversity, Fairness and Poverty, Environment and Corporate Risk. There are no major issues.
- 5.2 Equalities should be taken into account in the planning, delivery and monitoring of all services, so customer satisfaction research should aim to capture the views of groups covered by the Council's equality and diversity strategy. Where possible, consultation should aim to capture the views of people who do not currently use services, as well as those who do.

## **6. CONSULTATIONS**

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

## **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

## HIGHLIGHTS



### IMPROVED ACCESS TO SERVICES

- New ways of applying for, and verifying entitlement to, a wide range of services, including bus passes, benefits, emergency credit on district heating accounts, resident parking permits and video interviews for Council jobs.
- New training materials and modules for adult employability clients on online interview techniques, top tips and handy hints which have proved to be a huge success in supporting clients to secure employment.
- Increased use of digital platforms to deliver essential support and services to service users and carers that previously relied on face-to-face delivery, including consultations, assessments, reviews and advice on managing care.
- Contactless method introduced for local businesses delivering items to the calibration service for weights and measures equipment.
- Advice line for parents/carers of children with additional support needs.
- Production of a Love Dundee App allowing local traders to sell products online at no cost.
- A new Chit Chat Line which offers peer support to people struggling in their recovery from drug and alcohol issues.

### IMPROVED COMMUNICATION

- Signage, posters, website, social media posts, animations, leaflets and information round-ups produced by Communications to encourage compliance with Covid-related safety measures and in response to specific issues raised by the public.
- Earlier notice to advocates to ensure parents can be represented at Looked After Child Reviews and Child Protection Case Conferences, along with financial support to enable parents to participate in virtual meetings when their phone contracts don't cover this.
- Monthly city centre recovery group meetings with businesses to assist and guide traders through the pandemic, sharing best practice, government guidelines and access to financial support streams.
- On housing capital projects, greater communication by phone, email and online surveys to reduce the time spent in residents' properties while still obtaining the necessary information.

### SERVICE USERS SHAPING SERVICES

- Young carers acting as high school ambassadors, delivering awareness raising sessions and workshops for other young people, and involved as equal partners in the Carer Support Team.
- Schools and nurseries responding to feedback from parents/carers through meetings, surveys and targeted contacts on issues such as remote learning, SQA arrangements, school meals, arrangements for children with additional support needs and transition.

- Welcome back survey for nursery families after the first period of lockdown used to plan the supports offered to families while nurseries are closed again to all but children of key workers and vulnerable children, along with telephone calls to maintain relationships with families and gather information about what home learning they find most helpful.
- Despite the restrictions, still achieving an involvement rate of 17% in the tenant consultation on rent levels and an increased (virtual) attendance at the annual 'How Your Rent Is Spent' seminar.

### **MORE RESPONSIVE SERVICES**

- Adolescent Health and Wellbeing Group established to promote wellbeing, particularly mental health, for care leavers and care experienced young people.
- Extended and personalised opportunities for families including children with a disability to take part in outdoor activities.
- Building the capacity and confidence of health visitors and head teachers to better identify and assess children in need of additional support in Lochee, leading to more meaningful engagement with families in Team Around The Child meetings.
- New questionnaire at the start and end of Community Payback Orders, demonstrating the impact on clients in terms of issues such as health, housing, employment and relationships.
- Adapting processes to enable large volumes of same day payments from the Council to provide essential financial support to individuals and companies, along with text payment technology for individuals in need of immediate financial assistance which enables them to receive credit at their nearest Pay Point outlet.
- New 'Fuel Well' fuel poverty scheme introduced in conjunction with Poverty Commissioners who have lived experience of poverty. Elements such as tackling stigma, targeting and prioritising those in need and use of plain English were all discussed, with many incorporated into the scheme including a raising of the minimum support from £30 to £40.
- Support services delivered in community settings from the Safe Zone Bus, including help with health, mental health, drug and alcohol, debt, benefits, housing and homelessness, along with hot food and drinks and food / sanitary packs to those in crisis who could no longer use 'drop in' services.
- Community Assessment Support at Home Pathway and Community Response Team developed to allow a significant number of people with Covid-19 to be at home in the last days of their life who would not otherwise have been able to do so.

## IMPROVEMENTS MADE AS A RESULT OF CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

### 1. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S SERVICE

#### 1.1 National Entitlement Card

- Due to the additional and unprecedented pressures put on front-line delivery of services by COVID-19, the NEC Programme Office, in response to complaints and enquiries received by our partners and stakeholders, implemented a temporary response process to intercede and resolve issues more quickly to avoid additional complaints and reputational damage to the various NEC schemes, in particular the national travel concessions.
- The team have improved communication with all 32 local authorities, including more regular check-ins and opportunities to raise any issues. Communication with partners (Transport Scotland, Improvement Service, Young Scot) has much improved also, with regular meetings and new groups formed, eg a Communications Group with representation from all partners.
- NECPO have been expanding opportunities within the application process (including the Improvement Service's new online method of applying 'getyournec.scot') as well as using temporary measures throughout the pandemic, through which the team has learned much that could potentially improve and shape the future of NEC applications.
- The team helped run a successful Young Scot Attainment Project within Dundee, allowing young people to access free transport and meals by using their Young Scot NEC as a key to entitlements and rewards. This has been well received by the young people involved.

#### 1.2 Communications

- Supported regular requests for signage to encourage compliance with Coronavirus restrictions and safety arrangements. Over 100 posters have been created.
- Bespoke messaging on social media in response to Coronavirus issues raised by the public eg mask wearing on buses/in supermarkets; behaviour of dog walkers in parks; exemptions for mask wearing for medical conditions etc.
- Supported the creation of a pioneering scheme giving people who are unable to wear face coverings an exemption letter, in response to public concerns.
- Distributed Protecting People leaflets in lunch bags/food boxes to allay concerns about those without digital access missing key information. A series of radio adverts was also commissioned.
- Creation of a website as a single point of information on Coronavirus for Angus, Dundee and Perth and Kinross Councils - Tayside Cares.
- Daily and weekly Coronavirus information round-ups produced to keep the public, stakeholders and employees informed.
- Further increased use of video/animation to promote key messaging, in line with social media engagement data.
- A monthly video blog for employees from the Chief Executive.
- Budget consultation to gauge feedback on priorities and citizens' experiences during the pandemic, including things the Council did well and services that were missed in lockdown.

- Positive public feedback re communications in consultation. Public priorities re service changes, health information, Coronavirus restrictions and regulations, and use of digital channels, helped focus communications activity.
- Engagement with Fairness Commissioners for specific feedback on language, visuals and channels used to communicate during pandemic.

### 1.3 Covid Support

- During 2020, some officers from the Chief Executive's Service were involved in work outwith their normal roles, supporting the Council's response to Covid-19.
- An example of responding to the needs of customers is on Pharmacy delivery. Pharmacies could not organise volunteer drivers to deliver medicine to Shielding Group patients without confirmation from the patient that they had ordered a prescription from their GP. We held all the data (patient name, address, CHI number and GP Practice) just not the patient's confirmation that they had ordered the prescription. Officers from Chief Executive's met with IT, Customer Services and the NHS pharmacy manager to design a solution to what would otherwise have been a blockage. IT designed a simple confirmation form the next day and it was operational within three days. The shielding group were sent this form when they contacted the Covid helpline to ask for a pharmacy delivery. Their data was prefilled and all they had to do was click to confirm they had ordered a prescription that day. This sent an automatic email to their regular pharmacy to complete the order and arrange delivery. The pharmacies were supportive of this as it saved several phone calls and provided the real time information they needed. The form was used over 1,000 times in the twelve weeks it operated.

## 2. CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

### 2.1 Foster Carers

- Consultation with carers raised the issue of remittance advice slips being too complicated and difficult to understand. The family placement team listened and worked with colleagues in Finance to amend these. These are now sent fortnightly in a new format, and carers all report being happier with this new arrangement.

### 2.2 Young Carers

- Young Carers are involved as equal partners in the Carer Support Team as volunteers. Our Young Carer Ambassador role description, for example, was written by the first group of young volunteers undertaking that role in a session facilitated by the team manager and volunteer co-ordinator. That group also co-designed with a member of the Communications Team the Young Carer Ambassador Badge which the volunteers wear in school.
- The Young Carers participate as equal partners in the development of partnership agreements in all High Schools, setting the priorities for their school and taking on roles in delivering awareness raising sessions, drop-ins, groups and workshops for other young people alongside Carers Centre and school staff. We have 20+ Young Carer Ambassadors in High Schools across Dundee and are currently developing an equivalent role for student carers with D&A College.
- Our Young Carers Voice Group, a city-wide group of young carers aged 14-18, also work alongside our Involvement Worker and have been involved in much of the development of work across the city which underpins our work in school. This group have been involved in co-producing policies and resources, and also played a significant role in the implementation of the Carers Act.

### 2.3 Support for Care Leavers

- In October 2020, the Throughcare Aftercare team (TCAC) ran a Mental Health Survey which was promoted through the Moving On Facebook page and sent directly to young people through Messenger. 37 young people completed the survey, some were

supported to complete it while others completed it themselves. The data from the survey highlighted that many of the young people experienced difficulties with their mental health.

- Having listened to the young people and the information provided, the TCAC team have arranged to:
  - Re-establish the multi-agency Adolescent Substance Misuse Professionals' Group but reframe this as an Adolescent Health and Wellbeing Group to capture wider issues, particularly mental health which was a key issue highlighted in the discussions around substance use. This group will also be extended to include other relevant professionals with key roles in promoting the Health and Wellbeing for Care Leavers or Care Experienced young people.
  - Produce a monthly newsletter for young people and professionals focussing on a specific topic.
  - Share social media content on the Moving on Facebook page at least weekly to highlight mental health resources, supports and strategies alongside contact details of the Health and Wellbeing worker.
  - Involve the Health and Wellbeing worker in the DCC Engagement Team for Care Experienced Children and Young People.
  - Repeat and adapt the survey at regular intervals throughout 2021.

#### 2.4 Support for Children with Disabilities

- Through COVID restrictions, families with children with a disability have encountered additional challenges with periods of self-isolation, school closure and reduction in visiting services. We have listened to families and extended their opportunities for outdoor activities through liaison with the police to ensure families are able to make trips when travel restrictions are in place, making families' own gardens and communities more accessible and appealing to children through the provision of equipment like sandpit and sand; bicycle trailer and hood; and provision of organised supported activities when schools were closed. Practical support, including small grants and assistance with shopping, has reduced their sense of isolation and been a help to make ends meet.
- This approach has demonstrated a strong and creative partnership approach between the local authority, voluntary organisations and individual families in receipt of direct payments and their personal assistants. Each personalised example extends the repertoire of creative approaches which practitioners can draw on for children and families in the future.

#### 2.5 Impact of COVID-19 on Families

- Dundee participated in the FACE 19 research study undertaken by the University of Stirling. During August 2020 we sent out questionnaires to around 200 parents and carers of children and young people who were either Looked After or subject to Child Protection Registration. This study involved a national consultation on the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on families and their views on service provision and supports. Feedback from the University will inform practice and service provision.

#### 2.6 LAC Reviews and Child Protection Case Conferences

- Following feedback from advocacy services in Dundee regarding Looked After Child Reviews and Child Protection Case Conferences, advocates are now notified directly of the meeting if it is known that parents have advocacy provision in place. The feedback had indicated that due to short notice of the advocates being alerted it was difficult for parents to ensure they had representation.

- Feedback from some parents during lockdown in 2020 was that they did not have the finances to join meetings virtually through their mobile phone contracts. Dundee City Council provided financial support to some parents to enable their participation in the decision making for their children.

## 2.7 What Matters 2 You

- What Matters 2 You (WM2Y) is a community-based system change initiative working alongside professionals and families in two communities in Dundee and East Ayrshire. WM2Y is essentially about connecting with people, asking them what they want and then helping them to access that on their own terms.
- In the last 12 months, developments with WM2Y have been interrupted by the pandemic. However, this has also provided incentives and highlighted opportunities to develop this work. A dedicated Project Co-ordinator and a Learning Partner continue to work jointly with partners in identifying and consulting with children, young people and their parents/carers on the type of support they consider will make a positive difference to their lives. A number of community leadership events with professionals/parents/carers in the west of the city have been held to support these developments. During the outbreak, an adapted model of engagement has included:
  - Using the community garden at the Balgarthno Campus to engage with parents.
  - 1:1 coaching support at parents' own pace.
  - Online structured and themed virtual sessions for parents.
  - Walks and talks for parents who are not comfortable with group-based activity.
  - Providing practical support such as food/electricity supplies.
  - Continued engagement with Local Authority senior leaders.

## 2.8 Addressing Neglect and Enhancing Wellbeing Programme (ANEW)

- With support from CELCIS, ANEW continues to focus as a test of change on building the capacity, confidence and competence of Health Visitors and Head Teachers to better identify and assess children in need of additional support who are attending a nursery class or one of 3 Lochee Primary Schools. Despite the interruptions to work caused by the outbreak, this work has continued to progress over the last 12 months and is leading to more meaningful engagement with families in Team Around the Child Meetings.

## 2.9 Community Justice - Unpaid Work

- The provision of Unpaid Work placements by Dundee's Criminal Justice Service (CJS) is firmly embedded in listening to the public, both in terms of recipients of service and those completing Unpaid Work hours as part of a Community sentence. Elected Members, Local Community Planning Partnerships, Faith Organisations, Charitable Organisations, Community Gardens, Schools (especially primary schools) and Neighbourhood Groups all have a strong history of requesting projects that may be suitable for unpaid work. Feedback sheets are completed at the end of projects by recipients of service and feedback sheets are completed at the end of Unpaid Work (UPW) Orders by those undertaking UPW. The responses are overwhelmingly positive. We do have individuals who find the group element of projects more difficult and links are established with a range of individual placement providers, such as charity shops. Some of the feedback collected:

*"The good points about my unpaid work order have been going out and working as part of a team doing something for a community"*  
(Individual working on community allotment project)



*"The level of help, respect and exercise I got helped me get better life skills"*  
(Individual with supervision and UPW)

*"I learned my lesson about getting in trouble"*  
(Individual on UPW)

*"The teams were diligent, hardworking and made a great job of our garden"*  
(Community Group who had groundwork and planting done)

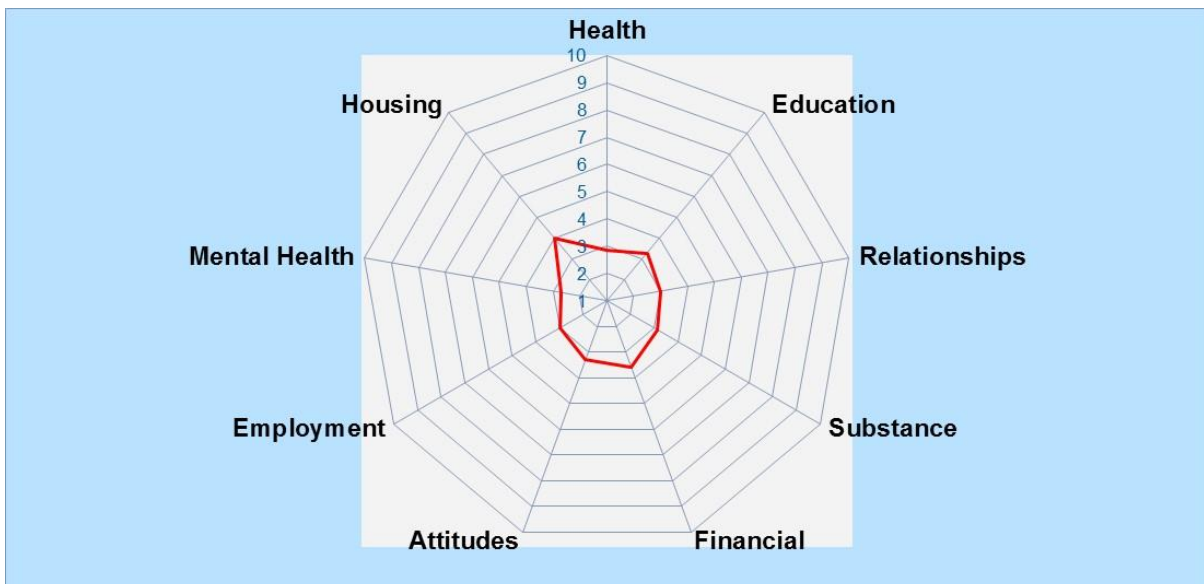
## 2.10 Community Custody Unit

- Along with other Council services, Dundee CJS is part of the multi-agency Project Board developing the female Community Custody Unit in Dundee. The Board includes community representatives and has a Communications sub-group which liaises with the Local Community Planning Partnership in Coldside. As well as sharing information about the proposed layout of the building and its function, the community has been given a lead role in agreeing the name of the unit and planning a community benefit sculpture that the contractors must finance as part of the contract.

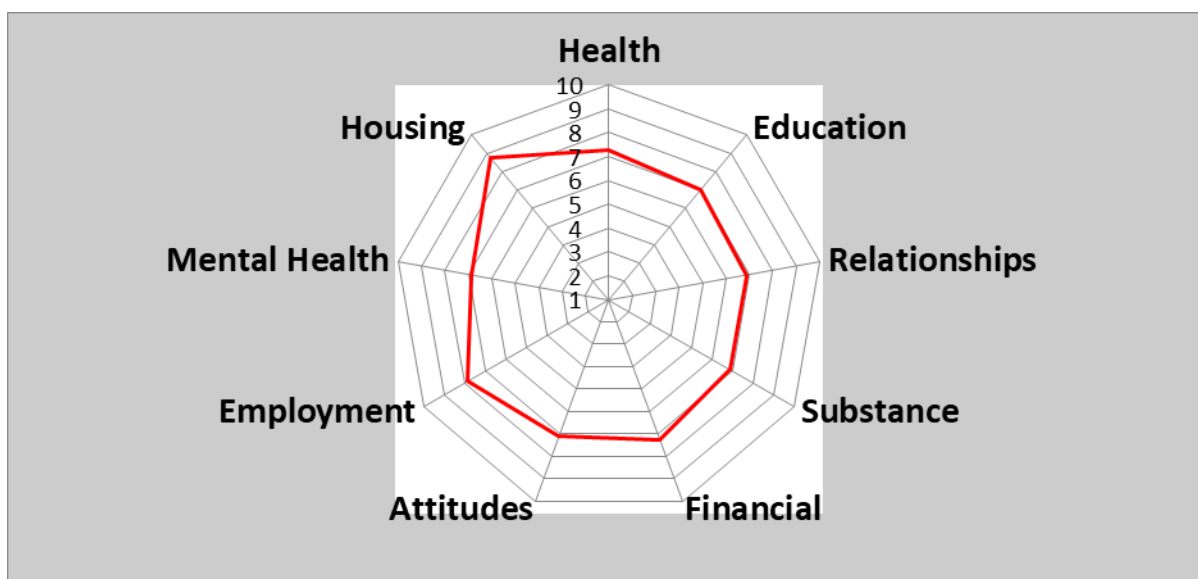
## 2.11 Community Payback Orders - Service User Feedback at Start and End of Order

- In September 2019, Dundee CJS asked staff to work with service users at the start of new orders to complete a Strengths and Needs Questionnaire (SNQ). These asked people about to start an Order to rate their own position across a range of key issues such as health, housing, relationships and employment. This was both to generate discussion about mutually agreed targets during the period of the Order and to make a comparison with the SNQ completed at the end of the Order.
- There were 39 SNQ's completed at the induction stage between 1 September 2019 to 31 March 2020 and 8 completions in the same time period. Scores are detailed in the diagrams below:

### Average Questionnaires Scores at Induction:



### Average Questionnaire Scores at Completion of Order:



- Whilst the information was based on a small number of questionnaires that were completed at the start and end of an Order, this exercise demonstrates the potential value in being able to demonstrate the impact on clients on the intervention of an Order. It is hoped that, as time progresses, more questionnaires can be completed and additional comments would be added by clients and staff which will further enhance the picture of distance travelled and improved outcomes. Distance travelled can be measured at different points in the year, perhaps bi-annually, as clearly each person will start and end an Order at different times.

#### 2.12 Service User Feedback from Partner Agencies

- Dundee CJS funds a mentoring service provided by Tayside Council on Alcohol. The mentors work with individuals to identify goals they wish to address. An outcome self-assessment is completed at the end of every intervention. In TCA's 2019-20 annual report they reported the following responses to key outcomes:

Reduction in Criminal Activity (self-reported):	Improved 51 (66%) Same 22 (29%) Worse 4 (5%)
Reduced Impact of Alcohol or Drugs:	Improved 48 (63%) Same 26 (34%) Worse 2(3%)
Improved Accommodation:	Improved 47 (62%) Same 26 (34%) Worse 3 (4%)

#### 2.13 Service Improvement actions as a result of complaints

- When a complaint investigation finds that a complaint is upheld or partially upheld there can be service improvement actions agreed with the person making the complaint. There have been no such complaints upheld in CJS but managers have suggested service improvement actions within the wider Children and Families service following complaint investigations.

#### 2.14 Schools and Nurseries

Throughout the last year, schools and nurseries have responded to feedback from parents/carers and children and young people in a range of ways. The focus has been within the framework for recovery including both periods of lockdown. While some feedback and listening has been in response to concerns or queries, others have been sought more

proactively by surveys of parents/carers. The list below provides some examples although is not exclusive, and we will continue to listen and respond to what children and families tell us and what reasonable steps we can take to improve learning and wellbeing:

- Regular meetings with Parent Councils and their Chairs to gather their views on many areas such as remote learning; SQA arrangements; school meals, arrangements for children with ASN.
- Online surveys from Head Teachers to parents/carers about remote learning and engagement with school.
- Targeted contact and support with individual families about the support they need at home.
- An Advice Line for parents/carers of children with Additional Support Needs (ASN).
- Listening to parents of children with ASN about transition and how we can make it better this year as it was interrupted unexpectedly last year.
- Listening to children and young people through on-line and in-person lessons about 'what works'.
- Improving the use of technology with feedback from families about their access to online platforms etc.
- Making arrangements for children and young people to access the Hubs in the first lockdown when families or their advocates told us they needed support.
- Direct involvement of parent representatives from Kingspark in the steering group to plan for its re-opening last September.
- Meeting remotely with the city-wide youth voice group, representing all our secondary schools, to gain feedback from young people about the impact of COVID for this age group. The feedback is shared with Head Teachers to highlight areas for improvement.
- 'Welcome Back' surveys for nursery families conducted in August 2020 to reflect on the support which families received throughout the first period of lockdown. Feedback has been used to plan the supports which will be offered to families whilst nurseries are closed to all but children of keyworkers and vulnerable children.
- Many nurseries have used forms and telephone calls to build and maintain relationships with families and to gather information about what home learning families find most helpful. By routinely checking in with families, staff, are adapting and personalising their response as necessary - sometimes this will be an adaptation for an individual family, sometimes for a group of families, sometimes for all families.
- Below are specific examples of how nurseries have used the Welcome Back surveys and other contacts to maintain relationships with families and to gather information about what has been helpful.

#### 2.15 Balgay Hill Nursery School

When we came back to nursery in August we surveyed all returning parents to evaluate our communication with them during Lockdown. 55% of families responded to the survey. 100% of parents responding said they strongly agreed or agreed that:

- their child had settled back into the nursery well (85% strongly agree, 15% agree).
- they were aware of the new procedures in place to help keep everyone safe during COVID-19 (87% strongly agree, 13% agree).

- the communication from the nursery during lockdown was good (82% strongly agree, 18% agree).

When asked what parents thought we could do better in terms of communication:

- 82% were happy with what we are doing.
- 15% mentioned that they miss having the daily face to face contact with their child's key worker. As a result, we amended our door routine to ensure that at least one day per week parents would be able to speak with their key worker. "Nursery news" was introduced to give parents a short, individualised update on what their child has been learning.

We now have 99% of our parents using emails to send and receive information which not only has improved communication but also helped the environment and our photocopying budget. Paper copies are handed to the one parent who does not have email.

## 2.16 Quarry View Nursery

Quarry View also carried out a Welcome Back Family Survey in August 2020 which asked about the support families had received during the lockdown experience eg through phone calls, emails, twitter and home learning packs.

Comments included:

"it helped knowing I'd be able to call if I was needing support"

"Really supportive making sure the family were doing okay and that we had everything we needed"

"Phone calls were reassuring at a difficult time"

"Helped amazingly, always checking in to see how everyone was and keeping updated with lockdown rules and regulations"

"The phone call, emails, twitter, garden visits and activity packs delivered by staff made us feel like we weren't alone. We weren't forgotten about, that we as a family were care for and remembered, that we weren't abandoned by the educators which are so important in our children's lives. The efforts that were put in by the staff were bar none and was very important to us as a family to know if we needed help and if we needed to talk they were there to listen and advise if required or put in touch with someone who could. We did as a family feel cared about and acknowledged and being still involved as part of the nursery community was the best thing for my child"

"Kept up to date with everything that was going on. Asked how I was coping, asked how my child was coping. Given ideas on things to try at home"

"staff done a fantastic job, between the phone calls, twitter updates and emails"

"It was nice that my child knew their ladies were missing them and thinking of them, it brought comfort on the days my child was missing nursery"

"During lockdown my child got a keyworker space which helped them ease into nursery this August. It also put us as parents at ease because staff remembered our child even if they had maybe only worked on one or two shifts with my child"

"Very supported and kept in the loop with things which was good"

"Regular calls from staff at nursery helped me a lot. Lockdown was tough and knowing that people were there for us if things ever got bad was reassuring, sometimes a chat and to know that you have support is all that is needed"

"Very helpful during lockdown. Having the garden visit really cheered us up 😊"

“Phone calls were very supportive and it was nice to keep in contact with the staff and get updates every week and to know that they cared for my child and my own well-being”

“Kept well informed with information”

“The phone calls during lockdown really helped and all the staff were very nice and helpful. I was really struggling to get baby milk from any supermarket in Dundee and one of the staff members went out their way and managed to find some and set it aside for me to collect, I couldn't be more thankful”

“I had emails which were informative and when speaking to staff on the phone they were so supportive and reassured me that if I wanted to phone at any time it was fine to do so”

“Was nice of the ladies to take the time out from everything going on to check in”

“Very supportive and good to receive just for a chat”

“We have had amazing care and support from staff”

“Had the most wonderful support and communication”

“Really liked the Twitter posts as it made me and my child feel connected to the nursery. We loved seeing familiar faces and activities that were posted”

“I found Twitter a good thing during lockdown, was also able to show the kids videos of their nursery teachers singing and interacting”

“Twitter was a marvellous tool, it allowed my child to still remain involved with his nursery and remain to keep a little bit of their routine also keep up with activities and song time and story time so they didn't forget and loved making things and enjoying the recipes shared and the different suggestions of things to do and try at home so our children didn't get bored. They were also able to keep in contact with their friends and teachers and this allowed us as a family to join in and get to know their friends and teachers also”

“The interaction my child had with twitter and the staff posting daily was good for them to see”

“Was great for my child to see the staff post videos”

“Always full of helpful tips”

“Helped bring updates with everything and to feel involved, also helped for getting in touch with the staff and sending updates from home”

“Twitter was reassuring, good to know everyone's feeling the same”

Lots of information was also provided on the safety measures when the nursery re-opened and this was positively commented on by families in their survey returns.

### **3. CITY DEVELOPMENT**

#### **3.1 City Centre Management**

- Monthly City Centre Recovery Group meetings have taken place with businesses throughout the year to assist and guide traders through the pandemic, sharing best practice, government guidelines and access to financial support streams. These meetings have been a valuable and much appreciated lifeline for businesses as they navigate through an anxious and challenging time. Through listening to traders, we were able to provide free downloadable COVID-19 guidance posters for use in their businesses, assist with queue management in public spaces, and obtain Government funding to produce a Love Dundee APP where all traders can sell their products online at no cost to them.

- Union Street - Spaces for People funding made it possible to undertake a temporary road closure in Union Street to make way for pedestrians and outdoor eating and drinking. Despite the measure being put in place at short notice to traders, through the creation of a special working group comprising the UNESCO City of Design team, Council officers, traders and local residents, the street has been transformed into a welcoming destination for people to live, work and shop in. This has seen colourful branding on the road, the creation of wooden parklets, the screening of bins, a 'Winter Wonderland' with pop up games and performances organised by the traders, and a unique atmosphere. Regular meetings and consultation with the traders and residents have helped shape and steer all decisions to date. Such has been the success of the scheme, traders and residents have expressed a keen interest in making the closure permanent.

### 3.2 Employability

- Online interviews have become the standard way employers recruit as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to customers' feedback that they were struggling with online interviews and online platforms, and didn't what to do in relation to the new recruitment processes, City Development's Adult Employability Service developed new training materials and modules on "Online Interview Techniques", top tips and handy hints. This has proved to be a huge success in supporting clients to secure employment.
- Between March 2019, when lockdown and other COVID-19 restrictions came into force, and mid-January 2021 the team achieved 44 job outcomes for the Employability Service's clients.

## 4. CORPORATE SERVICES

### 4.1 HR - Recruitment Procedures

- At the beginning of lockdown, HR had to act quickly and in collaboration with COSLA and other Local Authorities to come up with alternative digital solutions to continue to recruit to essential jobs during the pandemic. The Recruitment and Staffing Service created a new COVID-19 Recruitment Procedure and Process, including guidance for candidates, to carry out a 3-month pilot of a new feature in the Talentlink Recruitment system called 'Video Questions'. This allowed managers to send a series of questions to candidates to allow them to record their answers via video to then allow the manager to shortlist candidates further and reduce the number of two-way face-to-face virtual interviews later in the recruitment process. As part of the introduction of the video questions, a candidate/customer survey was carried out to identify the success of the new feature and any issues that the candidates may have experienced during the process. Feedback was gathered and sent to COSLA, and the provider of the new feature in order to consider any changes and improve the service. Changes were made to the video capability and the process to address the issues highlighted by our customers/candidates.

### 4.2 Corporate Finance

- Streamlining and modernising services - Whilst adapting our support services to accommodate customer needs in respect of the pandemic restrictions, we have used the opportunity to introduce new technology to redesign our processes to be as effective and efficient as possible:
  - we worked with our banking providers to adapt processes and systems to enable large volumes of same day payments from the Council in order to provide essential financial support to individuals and companies for a range of purposes.
  - we introduced text payment technology for individuals in need of immediate financial assistance which enables them to receive credit at their nearest Paypoint outlet.

- Tayside Pension Fund redesigned processes and used enhanced secure email facilities to provide full electronic pension service delivery to over 51,000 members within Tayside.

#### 4.3 Customer Services

- National Entitlement Card Process - Due to the lockdown restrictions in March 2020, customers were unable to come into Dundee House to provide the necessary evidence to support their application for a bus pass. This in turn generated a large volume of calls and an alternative method had to be put in place to cope with this demand and reduce the number of complaints we were receiving. As soon as restrictions were starting to lift and the grace period for extending bus passes was due to expire, we allowed customers to email in a copy of their evidence rather than requiring visual sight of it. This reduced the number of face-to-face interactions when the office opened again and still provides the customer with an alternative to having to come into the office. There is also now a facility for customers to apply online for their bus pass.
- Residency Parking Permits - Customers were required to come into the office to allow staff to verify the evidence they have to supply to qualify for a residency parking permit. This process is now available online to allow the customer to apply and upload evidence as well as pay for the residency permit, without the need to come into the office.
- Appointment System - An appointment system for all face to face Customer Services enquiries was introduced in August 2020. Face to face enquiries for all Customer Services enquiries are now appointment only, which means that customers are not having to wait for any length of time to be seen and allows us to better manage the number of customers coming into the building due to COVID-19.

#### 4.4 Benefit Delivery Team

- Council Tax Payments - Many of our customers faced cash flow issues as a result of COVID-19. We therefore promoted reduced and deferred payments where customers faced financial hardship. Flexibility was applied when dealing with individual circumstances and the customer's ability to pay. We were proactive in signposting customers to other help they may need (eg putting leaflets in with Council Tax bills) as a number of customers probably never required help from the benefits system before. Council Tax Reminder letters were reviewed and updated to consider the different payment dates available.
- Verification of evidence - As a result of staying at home to help suppress the virus, customers were no longer able to supply evidence in person. A sympathetic approach was adopted to take information over the phone without the need to provide documentary evidence.
- Over £500 refunds for Council Tax - Partnership working with the Incomes Team and a review of guidance in relation to Council Tax refunds over £500 made the procedure more efficient which is of benefit to customers as they receive their refunds more quickly.
- Employability Team - Better joined up working with the Employability Team regarding quality referrals to their service.

#### 4.5 Council Advice Services

- Fuel Well - Council Advice Services designed the Fuel Well Fuel Poverty scheme in conjunction with Faith In Community and the city's Poverty Commissioners who have lived experience of poverty. Four separate sessions over a 4 week period were convened with the Commissioners and elements such as tackling stigma, targeting and prioritising those in need, levels of support available and plain English in the design of the service were all discussed. Many ideas were subsequently incorporated into the final design of the scheme, including raising of the minimum amount of

support available from £30 to £40 after constructive discussions around the levels of need for customers over the winter period.

#### 4.6 Information Technology

- IT expanded our capabilities to meet video conferencing requirements by providing full functionality laptops. We have moved from the position of providing standardised laptops to providing full windows laptops, and developed a full new security and deployment platform to enable that.

#### 4.7 Youth Employability Service

- As a response to the demands of young people for support through social media, the Youth Employability Service have been using available data to track down unemployed young people in their communities and providing support with employability options resulting in 92.3% of school leavers entering positive destinations.
- Through involvement with local employers the Youth Employability Service has been successfully approved as a Government Gateway for the Kickstart scheme, resulting in up to 151 new traineeships being created.
- In 2020/2021 we worked with employers to develop 41 first stage jobs for young people in the city. These posts were funded through the No One Left Behind Young Person's Guarantee funding stream.
- Modern Apprenticeship Reviews have all moved online and WhatsApp has been added to the toolkit for communication. This has been beneficial as young people are asking for help more now if they are struggling.
- Modern Apprentices and Graduate Apprentices have also welcomed the video review shortlisting before interview. It has been reported that young people feel better prepared and less "on the spot".
- COVID has widened access for Care Experienced Young people with them choosing to engage via text, phone, WhatsApp, video calls and social media. There has been more of a wellbeing focus of the support delivered to this client group.

### 5. HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PARTNERSHIP

#### 5.1 Home First

- Over many years our service users and their carers have told us told us that they want to maintain as much independence as possible for as long as possible. Part of that independence is to continue to live at home when it is safe and enjoyable to do so. Customer feedback has endorsed our plan to continue to shift away from institutional models of care and to move to care being successfully delivered in people's own home. The integration of Health and Social Care has supported us to find ways of joining up services to deliver the best possible services to customers. Home First Support was established taking into account what customers said about how they might best receive support to live at home while working towards maintaining or regaining some of their independence.
- 'Home First' is an initiative looking at the whole pathway of support of support at home from a health and social care perspective and the initiative has three workstreams. 'Community Redesign', 'Front Door' and 'Unscheduled Care Redesign'.
- This initiative will be continuing to develop the Community Rehabilitation Service, as well as the expansion of the Enhanced Community Support and Dundee Enhanced Community Support Acute. Progress is planned to provide a community triage, care and treatment service. (avoiding the individual visiting a hospital unless this is needed). This will support clinical and social care assessment within the person's own home and minimise the potential for further harm and disruption as well as eliminating the opportunity for hospital acquired infection.



## 5.2 Care at Home during Pandemic

- Customer feedback has consistently informed us that many people wish to remain at home when in their final days. To support this, Community Nursing Services developed the local COVID-19 Dundee Community Assessment Support at Home Service Pathway and contributed to the development of COVID-19 Community Response Team. This team included Social Care / Red Cross support to care for people with COVID-19 who remained or returned to their own home. This enabled a significant number of individuals to remain at home in last days of life who would otherwise not have been able to do so.

## 5.3 Using Technology to support People

- While we know that some people do not want to use technology or receive assessment and support services online, some customers have been advising that this is likely to be an option that they want to be available in future. During the height of the pandemic, increased use of technology has enabled us to deliver essential support and services to patients, service users and carers that previously relied on face-to-face opportunities. We have been able to apply a range of digital platforms, such as 'Near Me', to provide services to patients/service users and carers who remain at home for consultations, assessments, reviews, advice on managing care and receiving information and advice. A number of services have been able to provide adapted services using remote fixed appointments as well as remote "drop-in" support.
- One example was when Learning Disability Services advertised support through a film clip promoting their Rainbow Olympics Event in May. The film featured 6 professions - Speech and Language Therapy, Dietetics, Community Learning Disability Nurses, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and Music Therapy - giving details of a socially distanced event to promote health, well-being and social connectedness, through creative and active tasks using the Rainbow as the logo and focus.

## 5.4 Dundee Carers Partnership

- Dundee Carers Partnership is a multi-agency group for carers of all ages led by Dundee Health and Social Care Partnership. A consultation exercise was launched in September to gather views of unpaid carers and young carers in the city to understand how the pandemic has affected them. The information gathered will allow Dundee Carers Partnership to plan appropriate supports and services to meet carers' outcomes. A report was accepted by the IJB in October 2020 that extended the deadline for a refreshed strategy to allow the next local carers strategy to be as relevant as possible to carers following the pandemic.
- Currently the Carers Partnership has allocated Carers Act Funding with priority being given to projects that provide care and support to carers and/or young carers related to the effects of COVID and post COVID recovery using information gathered in the recent consultation. The funding assessment group included a number of stakeholders including local carers.

## 5.5 Young Carers Voice

- The Young Carers Voice Group is managed and supported through Dundee Carers Centre who are commissioned through Dundee Health and Social Care Partnership to provide a number of services including Carer Involvement. The Carers Act (2016) places a duty on local authorities to support carers of all ages and specifically young carers have the right to a young carer statement.
- Young Carers Voice have been involved with consulting with young carers in relation to the Carers (Scotland) Act to inform the implementation of Young Carer Statements and the development of supports for young carers in Dundee. Members of Young Carers Voice worked with the Carers Centre to recruit some Young Carer Ambassadors in every secondary school in Dundee to be a local point of contact for the group. Young Carer Ambassadors are young carers who volunteer within their

school to support staff to raise awareness of young carers and become involved in planning and delivering information, training and support groups.

#### 5.6 Dundee Alcohol and Drug Partnership Implementation Group

- Despite the postponement of many actions as a result of COVID-19, significant city-wide efforts are still being made to continue providing support within local communities to people experiencing substance use-related challenges and to mitigate some of the detrimental consequences of lockdown and the disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups, including those affected by substance use.
- The Dundee Action Plan for Change in response to drug deaths was informed by the input of people with lived experience. The Action Plan reflects a broad partnership approach for working with vulnerable individuals and families affected by substance use and was reviewed in late 2020 as progress with some specific actions has been delayed due to COVID-19 and timescales need to be revised.
- The plan contains 12 key priorities addressing the issues highlighted in the report from the Dundee Drugs Commission. A 'Lived Experience' Network has been established, linking the lived experience input and development of both substance use and mental health. Progress has been made on tackling stigma and developing the Language-Matters campaign in Dundee.
- One of the priorities is to win the trust and confidence of all stakeholders through effective Leadership, Governance and Accountability. Progress has been made during 2020, following a governance review of the ADP. Membership of the partnership was strengthened and now includes an extended membership of all the key organisations, lived experience (Carers) and Elected Members. The Lived Experience memberships have not been taken up yet, but a Lived Experience Quality Group has been established and is being supported by the Scottish Recovery Consortium. It is expected that this Group will bring forward representatives to the ADP in due course, or make alternative suggestions as to how those with Lived Experience can be engaged in decision-making.
- Another priority is to ensure the meaningful involvement and engagement of people who experience problems with drugs, families and carers and those that advocate for them. The ADP sought to find out how people with lived experience would like to be involved in decision making and improving services and what would be meaningful to them. The aim of the ADP is to ensure this process is meaningfully led by individuals with lived experience., and it was agreed to establish the Lived Experience Quality Assurance Group to ensure that involvement of people with lived experience is embedded effectively and meaningfully across the ADP structure and the wider delivery of support. Although initial progress was made at the beginning of 2020, during lockdown it was not possible to continue with this work. With lockdown easing, the decision was taken to establish a Lived Experience Network which is now supported by the Dundee Peer Recovery Network and aligning the work with the Dundee Healthy Minds Network, ensuring an integrated response for substance use and mental health.
- The ADP continues to work closely with the Scottish Recovery Consortium to seek guidance to ensure lived experience and recovery communities are supported and included in the design and delivery of services. Dundee Carers Centre continues to support the Lifeline group which engages with the ADP (through the membership) and provides feedback to services for those who care or have cared for a family member affected by substance use.
- The Peer Recovery Network has been engaging with people through their newly established Chit Chat Line which offers peer support over the phone. This helpline supports individuals in recovery who are struggling and can talk to peer volunteers.
- Working group members have carried out engagement with people with lived experience of substance use, all of whom reported hearing negative language on a daily basis. This work has helped us to identify the key settings in which stigmatising language is encountered most often, the impact on those affected and their views on

what needs to change. This evidence - along with literature on addressing stigma, national work and similar campaigns from elsewhere - has shaped a number of proposals for a Dundee based language matters campaign. This will use a range of approaches, tailored for different settings and audiences.

#### 5.7 Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

- The Tayside Population Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy has been drawn up (it is currently in draft form and awaiting result of further consultation) The aim is to strengthen “engagement and participation”, “restore public trust, respect and confidence in our mental health services by improving mental health services” and deliver a “comprehensive programme of work”.
- The work has been shaped and will continue to be influenced by the Report of the Independent Inquiry into Mental Health Services in Tayside which gathered information from the public, those with lived experience and other stakeholders. There is an intention that this strategy will reflect the needs of all and in particular will make plans for people living with mental health conditions, their carers and the health and social care staff who provide support, care and treatment for them across mental health services in Dundee and Tayside.

#### 5.8 Safe Zone Street Outreach

- Prior to the pandemic, many people were used to visiting offices and centres for support and advice. This was particularly true for some of our most vulnerable customers who perhaps had no permanent home or no credit on their phone. From the people we were in contact with we learned that there were vulnerable customers in communities who were unsure of where to get help and who no longer were able to access “drop in” facilities, we also learned that there were others who had been more independent previously who now needed advice and support.
- As part of the response, DH&SCP, in conjunction with Tayside Council On Alcohol and other partner agencies, have delivered services in community settings in various locations across the city from the yellow Safe Zone Bus providing advice and assistance to all people in need.
- The bus now provides help with a range of issues, including health, mental health, drug and alcohol brief interventions, debts, benefits, housing and homelessness. They can also provide hot food and hot drinks along with food/sanitary packs to support those who are in immediate crisis. By working from the Safe Zone Bus as a base, nurses, social workers and welfare staff from a range of organisations can perform crisis interventions within a community-based setting.
- The mobile nature of the base allows the service to move to where it is needed most. Colleagues across the Partnership continue to support the bus, by bringing their professional skills and knowledge to the heart of communities.

### 6. NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

#### 6.1 Rent Consultation

- The Rent Consultation is critically important to tenants as it determines the level of rent to be charged in the coming year. A level of compromise in strategy and approach was necessary this year to ensure customers had sufficient opportunity and methods to get involved and have their say while observing COVID-19 restrictions. In previous years a large number of returns were captured face-to-face, or by door canvassing. Owing to the restrictions and the closure of district offices, these face-to-face opportunities were limited to local office appointments and postcards to Multi Storey apartments.

- The following strategies were employed to support and encourage customer feedback:
  - An online survey form advertised prominently on the Council's website together with information about the rent consultation, including an explanatory animation.
  - Use of social media to promote the survey widely and invite participation.
  - A press release to local media immediately prior to commencement and closure of the consultation together with an advert in the local press announcing the consultation dates.
  - Promotion of the survey in multi-storey blocks with posters and ballot boxes at foyers. An information booklet was posted through every door with a ballot card - tenants had a choice of posting a ballot in the box or responding online.
  - Sheltered Wardens canvassed tenants' views on the rent consultation options by intercom/telephone.
  - The consultation exercise was promoted by Dundee Federation of Tenants Associations and tenants' groups, including through newsletters.
  - Repairs Contact Centre advisers offered the survey questionnaire when contacting or being contacted by tenants reporting a repair request.
  - Construction staff delivered information leaflets with links to the online survey when completing repair appointments.
  - A staff bulletin was used to encourage staff who are Council tenants to participate and to take opportunities to raise awareness of the survey with customers.
  - Canvassing by telephone any tenants who would ordinarily have received a visit from their Tenancy Officer/Assistant.
  - DFTA contacted all of its members encouraging their participation in this exercise. In addition, RTOs were also invited to formally submit their preference on the proposed options. Due to COVID-19 not all these organisations were meeting regularly but a number of responses were received and added to the survey results.
  
- As part of the wider tenant engagement strategy, a seminar called "How Your Rent is Spent" is usually held during the summer to provide tenants with information about what their rent pays for and raise awareness of how rent levels are set. It also provides an opportunity for tenants to learn what the Council's housing priorities are and gives tenants the opportunity to let the Council know what is important to them. Information from this event informs the rent consultation. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, it was not possible to hold such a public meeting in 2020. In place of this, an online campaign was launched using stored email addresses for customers who had previously expressed an interest in being contacted regarding such events. Letters of invite and information along with a comprehensive social media campaign inviting participation resulted in 72 participants engaging with the online event compared to 31 who attended the event in 2019.
  
- The Rent Consultation ran from 28 October to 23 December 2020. The total number of tenants who participated in the process this year was 2,162. This equates to a return rate of 17% of the current housing stock. Whilst this represents a decrease in participation compared to last year's 20%, this can be considered an excellent result considering the challenges the Council and our customers have faced this year. The continued high level of participation also reflects the effective teamwork across Neighbourhood Services, other council services and from both DFTA and RTOs across the city.

## 6.2 Gypsy/Traveller Site at Balmuir Wood - Outcome of Resident Engagement on Potential Improvements to the Site

- Dundee City Council was awarded £90,660 from the Scottish Government to invest in improvements to the Gypsy/Traveller site at Balmuir Wood. The Scottish Government stated that participation of residents was paramount in deciding how the money should be spent. A consultation exercise has been carried out with both current and former residents of the site to determine which improvements are most important to them.
- The consultation exercise consisted of two surveys, one with current and one with former residents. The surveys were conducted either face to face (adhering to social distancing) or by telephone. A range of residents' priorities were identified with the most popular being fencing and second being the provision of a community facility. It has been proposed that construction of the fences will be carried out, with residents being consulted on size/type/materials and location of the fences (this work still has to be approved by Committee). Depending on the costs of fencing, it is proposed that any budget remaining will be considered for the provision of a community facility.

## 6.3 Housing Asset Management

- For External Wall Insulation projects, we have now started using an online survey system to undertake part of the consultation process as we can no longer hold mass meetings.
- Boiler Installations - we now communicate more by phone and email which reduces the need to visit the property but still allows officers to gather as much information as possible which reduces the time spent in the properties.
- Construction Design Services are using a new cleaning methodology that will reduce the length of time between visits to properties, eg limiting the amount of times vans have to return to the depot.
- Project Officers are making more use of internet apps to facilitate site meetings, progress meetings and pre-start meetings, to suit the contractor and/or various Council personnel.
- Smoke Alarms Project - start dates for the project were changed to accommodate children going back to school. This has improved safety by limiting the number of people in properties while work was carried out.
- Across the board when projects are now on site the public are communicated with in advance, so for example on External Cyclical Maintenance we contact each of the residents the week before to check if they are self-isolating etc or having anything delivered. This avoids our operatives and the public coming into the same space at the same time.
- The number of painters in a tenement close has been reduced to one at a time so as to reduce the possibility of infection transmission.
- We have changed the way we add emergency credit onto district heating accounts. Customers now phone Dundee Energy Efficiency Advice Project and go through a full assessment. If they still require the emergency funds then they can contact staff in Housing Asset Management Unit by phone or email and the credit is made within one hour.
- On ECM we recently changed the way we paint external wiring and fencing, now giving residents two options on a case by case basis.

#### 6.4 Supporting Environmental and Horticultural Community Groups and Encouraging Public Participation

- Dundee's environmental/horticultural groups fed back that that they find it beneficial to share best practice, highlight their work and be made aware of initiatives and funding to develop their groups and projects. The existing Take Pride in Your City monthly bulletin was developed into a more detailed newsletter during lockdown which highlights Dundee's projects and encourages participation, plus features relevant articles and links.
- The Council was unable to water city centre planters maintained and planted by Bonnie Dundee's volunteers as a result of reduced capacity due to COVID-19 and the phased recovery. Volunteers were keen to continue their planting scheme for the benefit of Dundee's citizens and to boost morale of those isolating nearby or passing through the city centre. Feedback from volunteers was taken on board and a solution was reached. Volunteers are now able to borrow a portable water bowser from the Council and fill it at a nearby depot to water the planters themselves.
- Dundee Flower & Food Festival 2020 was cancelled due to COVID-19. Following feedback received from festival volunteers, staff and members of the public, a virtual show was delivered. This allowed participation from a range of groups and organisations usually involved in the festival and provided opportunities for public participation.

#### 6.5 Trading Standards

- As a result of a complaint regarding the safety of imported PPE (personal protective equipment) to combat COVID-19 we liaised with our counterparts in Border Force. Having successfully stopped the offending PPE entering the country we then recognised the benefits of 'joint working' with Border Force and have now entered into a formal partnership agreement with them to better tackle this type of issue going forward.
- Our calibration service for the weights and measures equipment used by local businesses was tweaked to facilitate a 'contactless' method of delivering items. This ensured that a normal service could be maintained for local industry.
- Our Trading Standards Advice Line for consumer/business enquiries has been staffed since home working was introduced. Whilst it was not possible to utilise different contact points from our telephone system a 'workaround' was developed so our 'duty officer' service could be maintained.