

A Framework Approach to Place-Based Working



Context

Angus Council shared its evolving approach to place-based working at the National Planning Hub's Local Development Plan Workshop in April 2026. This case study outlines how the Council is working in genuine partnership with communities to shape local priorities and deliver long term change.

The Council Plan for Angus (2023–2028) places local democracy at the heart of decision-making. It highlights the importance of supporting Community Councils and reflects the principles of COSLA's Blueprint for Local Government, committing the Council to act increasingly as an *enabler* rather than a sole service provider. The Council Plan emphasises collaboration at national, regional and local levels, ensuring that finite resources are targeted where they matter most and that services remain sustainable.

Framework Approach to Place-Based Working

As the Council Plan (2023–2028) was being developed, the Council aligned its work with Scotland's major public service reform agendas, including the Christie Commission, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, the Place Principle, COSLA's Blueprint, the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child



(UNCRC) (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024. Together, these set a clear expectation for more collaborative, community-led, joint decision-making and prevention-focused public services.

[The Framework Approach to Place Based Working](#) unanimously approved by the Council on 20 June 2024, sets out a transformational shift in how the Council and partners work with communities. It is built around four key components:

- **Integrated reform principles** — combining community empowerment, the Place Principle, wellbeing outcomes, Christie recommendations and COSLA's Blueprint into one coherent approach.
- **Devolved local decision-making** — strengthening local democratic governance and embedding joint decisions within each place.
- **Deliverability from the outset** — ensuring priorities and projects are realistic, costed and achievable and within a delivery plan outlining the short, medium, long term and aspirational priorities, actions and proposals.
- **Granular, community-friendly evidence** — using detailed data and engagement results to provide accessible definitions of place to build a shared understanding of local conditions.

“Community” in our approach is considered in its widest sense, bringing together residents, the Council, Community Planning Partners, businesses, investors and the third sector to agree shared priorities, make decisions collectively, develop plans using local insight, and deliver projects with clear governance and support. This shared model strengthens local democracy, builds trust and ensures decisions are grounded in what matters most to people and places.

Further details on the Council's approach and how it will be implemented can be found within the Report itself, which is hyperlinked above. Appendix 1 to the Report can be accessed [here](#).

Integration of the Framework Approach to Place-Based Working

The first major plan to adopt the Council's new place-based working approach is the Local Development Plan (LDP). Aligning the LDP with the framework approach ensures it becomes a community partnership-led plan, fully consistent with the engagement and consultation requirements of the new planning system. A core aim is to support communities to create their own plans for their towns and villages and plans that go beyond Local Place Plans. As these are developed, the Council will integrate them directly into the LDP and its Delivery Plan so that community priorities shape land use planning and long-term investment in their towns and villages tied to the delivery plan.



Place-Based Assessments

The starting point is a shared understanding of what is happening in each community today. This is being developed through place-based assessments, using adapted Place Standard themes and a SWOT analysis informed by data and engagement. These assessments will:

- Form part of the new LDP.
- Align with National Planning Framework 4.
- Provide the evidence base for Community Partnership Plans.
- Be refined with communities to ensure they reflect lived experience.

Themes adapted from the Place Standard use language communities recognise, making the assessments easier to understand and enabling residents to contribute insights and local knowledge not captured in formal datasets. From these assessments, the community partnership board plans will be developed in partnership.

Community Planning

The next major plan to use this approach is the Community Plan/Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP). It will draw on the place-based assessments and community feedback to set priorities, with future updates incorporating the community partnership plans to ensure alignment across all of the community planning partnership and its priorities.

Public Sector Reform – The National Context

The Scottish Government's Public Service Reform Strategy (2026) and Democracy Matters Route Map (2026) set a national direction for more empowered, community-led public services. The Council's framework approach to place-based working predates both documents but is fully aligned with their ambitions. It strengthens local democracy, supports shared decision-making and already delivers many of the outcomes these reforms seek to achieve often going further.

What Happened

The Approach to Working with Communities

The Council's approach goes beyond traditional engagement. While the Council has always worked with local people, the new model strengthens partnership working by combining data and lived experience to understand local needs and support community-led planning across all aspects of local life. It moves from consultation to shared decision-making, built on long term relationships rather than one-off projects. The focus is on delivering the community's own plan, together, shifting from *doing to* or *doing for* communities to *doing with them*, supported by clear governance and equal decision-making structures.



Community Partnership Boards

Every large town or village will have a Community Partnership Board. Bringing together community representatives, the Council, public services, local organisations, businesses, investors and other partners. Each Board provides a formal structure for shared decision-making; accountability and transparency; coordinating resources and avoiding duplication; and overseeing delivery of the community's plan. This governance model ensures the community's voice is central at every stage and that responsibility for delivery is genuinely shared.

We are still looking to adapt the Community Partnership Board model to our wider rural area which contains a large number of smaller villages to ensure the framework approach works for our rural area as much as it does our seven main towns and four larger villages. How we do this is currently being developed.

How this Shapes Council and Community Planning Activity

Place-based working is not separate from Council or Community Planning activity — it directly shapes it. Community-led priorities feed into Council, Community Planning Partnership and Third Sector plans. Evidence gathered through place-based work strengthens strategic decision-making and ensures resources are targeted where they have the greatest impact. In practice, Community Partnership Plans become part of the wider plans, programmes and strategies of these organisations, direct resources to respond to local priorities, and provide a clearer understanding of trends, needs and opportunities. In short, place-based work shapes the plans, and the plans support the place-based work.

Benefits for Communities and Partners

This approach helps communities and partners focus limited resources where they matter most. It supports communities to lead projects themselves or work jointly with partners, and it opens access to external funding not available to the Council alone. Most importantly, it gives residents a meaningful say in what they value and want for the future, ensuring decisions are transparent, accountable and community-driven. By aligning local priorities with Council and Community Planning Partnership strategies, plans and programmes, each place becomes more vibrant, resilient and sustainable.

Areas of Collaboration

Collaborating with Young People

A central part of the Council's approach is integrating the UNCRC, ensuring young people have a meaningful voice in decisions that affect them. The aim is to embed their visions, ideas and priorities within both local and Angus-wide plans. Each town and village will have its own Young People's Plan, alongside a collective Young Peoples Plan for Angus, ensuring their views are fully captured, used in decision-making and communicated back to them. These plans will be updated regularly so young people's voices continue to shape their communities.



The first step was a high-level survey using the Children and Young People's Place Standard, completed in April 2026. The results are now being analysed and will inform further engagement as part of the place-based assessments, forming the foundation of both the Young People's Plans and the wider Community Partnership Plans. The ambition is for young people to have their own board within each Community Partnership, with representation on the main Board as well.

Work has begun on the first Young People's Plan in Brechin, supported by *A Place in Childhood*, with completion expected by the end of 2026. A similar process is underway with the Junior Community Council in Montrose, aligned with the establishment of the Montrose Community Partnership Board. We aim to complete the Young Peoples Plans for Brechin and Montrose by the end of 2026 before the approach is rolled out across Angus.

This work will inform the LDP, helping fulfil legislative requirements for engaging young people, and will also shape the new Community Plan/LOIP. Over time, Young People's Plans will be integrated into relevant Council, Community Planning Partnership and partner strategies giving them a larger voice and influence in decision-making than before and to also provide feedback to them how their views were taken into account.

How is Collaborative Working Managed?

As this transformation is still at an early stage, internal governance arrangements are being developed across the Council and Community Planning Partnership to oversee implementation, monitoring and delivery. For communities, Community Partnership Boards will provide the formal structure for collaborative working, monitoring progress and reporting into Council and Community Planning governance arrangements. These processes are still being finalised.

To support delivery, a new Placemaking and Urban Design Team has been established, consisting of a Co-ordinator and two Project Officers. However, responsibility for implementing the place-based approach sits with all Council Services and Community Planning Partners, reflecting the collaborative nature of the model.

Overall Result

Every large town and village in Angus will have a Community Partnership Board and its own Community Partnership Plan and the rural area will have a tailored approach, influencing and aligning with Council, Community Planning Partner and wider partner strategies. As the LDP is the first major plan produced under this new approach, the Council aims for it to become the first community partnership-led LDP, supporting both Council ambitions and the Scottish Government's Public Sector Reform objectives.



Lessons Learned

Challenges

Implementing a transformation of this scale takes time. The complexity of the place-based approach has led to early delays in Brechin and Montrose, particularly around consolidating data and engagement information into a new Council wide system aligned with the place-based themes. This work is essential for becoming a data-driven organisation, but it has been challenging and time-consuming. Understanding the approach across Council Services, Community Planning Partners and communities has also taken longer than expected, contributing to delays in finalising the communications strategy and engagement and consultation plan, both due for completion by the end of 2026. Further challenges are expected as the approach continues to be embedded.

What has Worked Well?

Despite these challenges, several important successes have been achieved:

- Unanimous Council approval demonstrated strong political leadership and commitment to transformational change.
- Early integration of the place-based approach across services has accelerated progress, with the first Montrose Community Partnership Board meeting scheduled for June 2026.
- Several place-based assessments have been drafted. These assessments will go out for community engagement and involvement as part of the preparation of the new LDP and Community Plan.
- The approach has been recognised by the Scottish Government as aligning with Public Sector Reform, with discussions underway about the Council acting as an exemplar, including in delivering the Democracy Matters route map.
- Community groups in Montrose have shown strong early buy-in, demonstrating genuine enthusiasm for collaborative working and shared decision-making.

Should you wish further information on the framework approach to place-based working in Angus, then please contact Antony McGuinness: Service Manager – Development Planning, Environment, Climate Change, Placemaking and Urban Design at: mcguinnessa@angus.gov.uk.

This case study has been prepared in collaboration by Angus Council and the National Planning Improvement Team at the Improvement Service. We publish good practice case studies identified through our work on the National Planning Improvement Framework and the National Planning Hub. They aim to support the sharing of good practice and build collaboration across the sector in addressing common challenges. Please email us at npi@improvementservice.org.uk if your authority has a good practice case study to share.

