

MINUTES of MEETING of ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL held ON A HYBRID BASIS IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, KILMORY, LOCHGILPHEAD AND BY MICROSOFT TEAMS on THURSDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 2024

Present:

Councillor Dougie Philand (Chair)

Councillor John Armour	Councillor Reeni Kennedy-Boyle
Councillor Gordon Blair	Councillor Jim Lynch
Councillor Jan Brown	Councillor Luna Martin
Councillor Math Campbell-Sturgess	Councillor Tommy MacPherson
Councillor Garret Corner	Councillor Ian James MacQuire
Councillor Maurice Corry	Councillor Liz McCabe
Councillor Audrey Forrest	Councillor Dougie McFadzean
Councillor Kieron Green	Councillor Julie McKenzie
Councillor Amanda Hampsey	Councillor Yvonne McNeilly
Councillor Daniel Hampsey	Councillor Ross Moreland
Councillor Graham Hardie	Councillor Iain Shonny Paterson
Councillor Anne Horn	Councillor Gemma Penfold
Councillor Fiona Howard	Councillor Alastair Redman
Councillor Willie Hume	Councillor William Sinclair
Councillor Andrew Kain	Councillor Andrew Vennard
Councillor Jennifer Kean	Councillor Peter Wallace
Councillor Paul Donald Kennedy	

Attending:

Pippa Milne, Chief Executive
Douglas Hendry, Executive Director
Kirsty Flanagan, Executive Director
Evan Beswick, Chief Officer – Health and Social Care Partnership
David Logan, Head of Legal and Regulatory Support
Anne Blue, Head of Financial Services
Fergus Murray, Head of Development and Economic Growth
Jim Smith, Head of Roads and Infrastructure Services
Jane Fowler, Head of Customer and Support Services
David Gibson, Chief Social Work Officer
Shona Barton, Governance Manager
Stuart Green, Corporate Support Manager
Mags Thomson, Council Tax and Benefit Operations Manager
Matt Mulderrig, Development Policy and Housing Manager
Mandy Sheridan, Service Improvement Officer – Children, Families and Justice
David Love, Audit Scotland
Jillian Matthew, Audit Scotland
Mark Outterside, Mazars
Gregory Odour, Mazars

Prior to the commencement of Business, the Provost, on behalf of the Council recognised recent achievements in Argyll and Bute in respect of Inveraray and District Pipe Band, Oban Pipe Band, Highland Dancer Eilidh Gammons from Helensburgh, Paralympic Medal Winner Gordon Reid from Helensburgh and Wilma MacKenzie from Tarbert who did the engraving on the Mastermind trophy.

The Provost, congratulated Councillor Jennifer Kean on her recent marriage; and congratulated Evan Beswick on his recent appointment as Chief Officer of the Health and Social Care Partnership.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mark Irvine and Gary Mulvaney.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Jim Lynch advised in relation to item 19 of the agenda (Clipper Race Bid 2026) that he had been appointed to the Oban BID Board by the Council. Having taken note of the Standards Commission Guidance in relation to declarations (issued on 7 December 2021), with specific reference to section 5.4(c), he did not consider that he had a relevant connection and as such would remain in the meeting.

The Provost ruled and the Council agreed that, in order to facilitate smooth running of the Agenda, to vary the order of Business and to consider item 26 of the Agenda (Rothesay Pavilion Update) as the last item of Business allowing consideration of all the items to be taken in public before the exclusion of the press and public.

3. MINUTES

(a) Argyll and Bute Council held on 27 June 2024

The Minutes of the meeting of Argyll and Bute Council held on 27 June 2024 were approved as a correct record.

(b) Special Argyll and Bute Council held on 15 August 2024

The Minutes of the Special meeting of Argyll and Bute Council held on 15 August 2024 were approved as a correct record.

4. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

(a) Policy and Resources Committee held on 15 August 2024

The Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 15 August 2024 were noted.

Arising from item 4 of these Minutes (Financial Reports Monitoring Pack – 30 June 2024) the Council agreed that the revenue budget virement over £0.200m outstanding from 2023-24 be approved as per paragraph 2.6.3 of the submitted report.

(b) Community Services Committee held on 22 August 2024

The Minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee held on 22 August 2024 were noted.

(c) Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee held on 12 September 2024

The Minutes of the meeting of the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee held on 12 September 2024 were noted.

5. AUDIT SCOTLAND DIGITAL EXCLUSION NATIONAL PERFORMANCE AUDIT

The Council gave consideration to a report presenting the Audit Scotland Digital Exclusion National Performance Audit which had been published on 22 August 2024. Audit Scotland were in attendance at the meeting to present their findings and recommendations.

Decision

The Council –

1. noted the report and the presentation by Audit Scotland;
2. noted the specific issues facing Argyll and Bute in digital exclusion; and
3. noted the progress that the Council was making in tackling digital exclusion and that further work would be undertaken by officers to address recommendations in the report where appropriate.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Customer Support Services dated 26 September 2024, submitted)

The Provost thanked David Love and Jillian Matthew of Audit Scotland for their presentation and attendance at the meeting.

6. LEADER'S REPORT

The Council gave consideration to a report providing an update on the activities of the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jim Lynch, for the period 15 June to 13 September 2024.

Decision

The Council –

1. noted the content of the report; and
2. noted that any reports, briefings or copy correspondence referred to in the report could be requested as appropriate through the Leadership Support Manager, noting that some confidential reports provided by external organisations such as COSLA may be restricted.

(Reference: Report by Leader of the Council dated 13 September 2024, submitted)

7. POLICY LEADS REPORT

The Council gave consideration to a report providing an update on key areas of activity for each Policy Lead Councillor. The report aimed to provide updates from all Policy Leads as regularly as possible, so that all Members were informed, up-to-date and able to engage with current issues.

Decision

The Council noted the content of the submitted report.

(Reference: Report by Policy Lead Councillors dated 13 September 2024, submitted)

8. WARD 2: KINTYRE AND THE ISLANDS - BY-ELECTION RESULTS: 18 JULY 2024

The Council gave consideration to a report providing the results of the Ward 2: Kintyre and the Islands By-election which had been held on 18 July 2024.

Decision

The Council noted the election of Councillor Anne Horn to Ward 2: Kintyre and the Islands following the By-election held on 18 July 2024.

(Reference: Report by Returning Officer dated 19 July 2024, submitted)

9. COUNCIL PRIORITIES

The Council gave consideration to a report inviting Members to reconsider the Council priorities for the remainder of the life of the Council following the change of Council Administration in April 2024.

Decision

The Council agreed the Council Priorities for the remainder of the life of the Council 2024 - 2027, as moved by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jim Lynch and seconded by the Depute Leader of the Council, Councillor Audrey Forrest, and as set out at Appendix 1 to this Minute.

(Reference: Report by Chief Executive dated 2 September 2024, submitted; and Council Priorities moved by Councillor Jim Lynch, seconded by Councillor Audrey Forrest, tabled)

10. ASPIRING PLACES; COMMUNITY PROJECTS IN ARGYLL AND BUTE

The Council gave consideration to a report recommending an alternative approach to the development of Area Plans in light of the change in Administration in April 2024, to ensure that any approach was in line with any revision to Council priorities.

Decision

The Council agreed to –

1. rename the initiative as 'Aspiring Places: Community Projects in Argyll and Bute';
2. adopt Consul Democracy, a COSLA supported tool for civic participation, as a user friendly digital platform to which constituted community groups could promote their proposals (regardless of stage of development);
3. engage with all community groups over the same period of time rather than a phased approach on an area basis;
4. provide guidance to inform community groups of potential funding opportunities; and

5. with the emergence of a live community digital platform, no longer create the publication of 8 'Area Plan' documents and subject to a trial period, alternatively report to members on a) the outcomes of the initiative through a formal evaluation and b) future recommendations on the long term viability and retention of the Aspiring Places – Community Projects in Argyll and Bute initiative.

(Reference: Report by Chief Executive dated 2 September 2024, submitted)

11. POLITICAL MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The Council gave consideration to a report setting out vacancies both within the Council and external organisations, advising of a change of membership of the Budget Working Group and providing an updated Political Composition of the Council.

Decision

The Council:

1. agreed the following appointments to Council committees and external organisations:
 - a) Argyll Islands Sounding Board – Vice Chair, Cllr Anne Horn
 - b) Community Services Committee – Cllr Anne Horn
 - c) Argyll and Bute Harbour Board – Cllr Andrew Kain (in place of Cllr Fiona Howard)
 - d) West Highland Housing Association Board – Cllr Dougie McFadzean
 - e) Clyde, Kintyre and the Islands Ferry Stakeholders Group – Cllr Anne Horn
 - f) Argyll and Bute Licensing Board – Cllr Andrew Kain
 - g) Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands Community Planning Group – Cllr Anne Horn (in place of Cllr Dougie McFadzean);
2. agreed to consider the following vacancies at a future meeting of the Council:
 - a) Ionad Chaluum Chille Ìle (ICCI), The Gaelic Centre, Islay
 - b) SOILLSE, National Network for Gaelic Research Consultative Committee;
3. appointed Cllr Jim Lynch as Policy Lead for Economic Development, Islands, Rural Communities and Housing;
4. appointed Cllr Audrey Forrest as Policy Lead for Gaelic;
5. noted the updated membership of the Budget Working Group; and
6. noted the updated Political Composition of the Council.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support dated 17 September 2024, submitted; and Motion by Councillor Jim Lynch, seconded by Councillor Ross Moreland, submitted)

12. COUNCIL CONSTITUTION REVIEW 2024

The Council gave consideration to a report proposing amendments to the Council Constitution since the previous annual review in 2023.

Decision

The Council agreed the adjustments to the Council Constitution as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support dated 16 August 2024, submitted)

13. ALL GAELIC SCHOOL CONSULTATION FINDINGS

The Council gave consideration to a report setting out the findings of the 10 week consultation that was carried out between 22 April and 30 June 2024 in fulfilment of action 2.11 of the Council's Gaelic Language Plan.

Decision

The Council –

1. acknowledged and thanked everyone who took the time to engage with and respond to the consultation;
2. recognised the role Gaelic had played in the history of Argyll and Bute and the continued efforts to promote the language and its culture to our communities;
3. commended the Education Service for the continued delivery and growth of Gaelic Medium Education and Gaelic Learner Education across the authority;
4. reaffirmed commitment to ensuring that the Council complies with its duties under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, including delivery of the Gaelic Language Plan;
5. noted that of the 673 respondents to the survey, 55% were not in favour, while 45% were in favour of pursuing an all Gaelic School in Argyll and Bute; and
6. agreed that, against a backdrop of reducing budgets and competing priorities, the Council was not in a position to pursue this matter any further at this time, and would continue to pursue a more equitable approach of provision of Gaelic in existing schools across the wider area, thereby ensuring more pupils had access.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Education dated 2 September 2024, submitted; and Motion by Councillor Audrey Forrest, seconded by Councillor Jim Lynch, submitted))

14. EARMARKED RESERVES REVIEW

The Council gave consideration to a report providing the outcome of a review undertaken of all earmarked reserves currently held. The review looked at whether each earmarked reserve was still required for the originally intended purpose and had asked Services to provide updated plans of spend.

Decision

The Council –

1. approved that the Earmarked Reserves detailed in Appendix 2 totalling £1.444m be released to the General Fund to help bridge the budget gap in 2025-26;

2. approved that the Earmarked Reserves detailed in Appendix 3 totalling £0.114m be released to the General Fund to help bridge the budget gap in 2025-26 and that cost pressures totalling £0.023m be included in the next update of the Budget Outlook;
3. noted that expiry dates had been added for all earmarked reserves and agreed that the default position was that any earmarked reserves that had not been fully utilised by that date would be returned to the General Fund unless otherwise agreed by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT), in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leaders; and
4. approved the non-financial amendments to the presentation of the Earmarked Reserves as outlined at section 7.1 of the submitted report.

(Reference: Report by Section 95 Officer dated 19 August 2024, submitted)

15. 2022-23 AUDITED ANNUAL ACCOUNTS – CHARITABLE TRUSTS

The Council gave consideration to a report advising of the conclusion of the audit of the Charitable Trusts for 2022-23. The external auditors Mazars had issued their Annual Report for 2022-23 and were invited to present the report to the Council.

Decision

The Council –

1. noted that an unqualified certificate had been issued for the 2022-23 Charitable Trusts Accounts;
2. approved for signature the Charitable Trust Accounts for 2022-23 and the ISA 580 letter of representation; and
3. noted Mazar's Annual Audit Report for 2022-23.

(Reference: Report by Section 95 Officer dated 18 September 2024, submitted)

The Provost thanked Mark Outterside and Gregory Odour of Mazars for their attendance at the meeting.

16. COUNCIL TAX ON SECOND HOMES - COLLECTION RATES 2024/25

The Council gave consideration to a report examining the implementation and impact of the policy granting authority to impose a council tax premium of up to 100% on second homes in Argyll and Bute which had been introduced from April 2024.

Decision

The Council noted the content of the submitted report and that regular updates would be provided as part of the routine revenue budget monitoring reports throughout the year.

(Reference: Report by Section 95 Officer dated July 2024, submitted)

17. HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS REGIONAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

The Council gave consideration to a report inviting formalisation of the Council's official membership on the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership and highlighting its activities and progress from an Argyll and Bute perspective to elected members through regular reports to the Policy and Resources Committee.

Decision

The Council –

1. agreed formally that its official representatives on the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership (HIREP) should be the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive, given the strategic significance of HIREP's focus and activity;
2. acknowledged the contributions that its officers had made to date to the progress of HIREP through their involvement in, and input to, the Senior Officers Group and associated sub-groups; and
3. requested that officers provide regular reports on HIREP's activities and progress in relation to Argyll and Bute, to the Policy and Resources Committee, as appropriate in line with the schedule of HIREP meetings; noting that to allow for recent amendments noted at the HIREP meeting on 28th August to be addressed, a report on the HIREP Regional Economic Strategy would be presented for endorsement at the Argyll and Bute Council meeting on 21 November 2024.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support and Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated 26 September 2024, submitted)

Councillor Daniel Hampsey left the meeting at this point.

18. ARGYLL AND BUTE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2: DELIVERY PROGRAMME

The Council gave consideration to a report proposing the adoption of a Delivery Programme setting out how Local Development Plan 2 could be implemented and showing the actions required to deliver it's sites, proposals and policies. Adoption and Publication of a Delivery Programme following the adoption of Local Development Plan 2 was a statutory requirement.

Decision

The Council –

1. noted the content of the submitted report and the proposed Local Development Plan 2 Delivery Programme contained at Appendix 1; and
2. agreed to adopt and publish the Local Development Plan 2 Delivery Programme.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated September 2024, submitted)

19. CLIPPER RACE BID 2026

The Council gave consideration to a report providing information supporting a potential bid for the Clipper Round the World Yacht Race to return to Oban in the summer of 2026.

Decision

The Council agreed to make a bid for the Clipper Race to return to Oban in 2026, with a bid fee not exceeding £30,000 to be funded from the Council's Unallocated General Fund; noting that it was intended that the costs of the event be met by private sponsorship as far as possible and that a further report would be submitted in due course.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated 5 September 2024, submitted)

20. LOCAL HEAT AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY STRATEGY AND DELIVERY PLAN

The Council gave consideration to a report advising on the progress of developing the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy in accordance with the Council's statutory duties to prepare, publish and update a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy and Delivery Plan as prescribed by the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (Scotland) Order 2022.

Decision

The Council approved the proposed Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy and Delivery Plan for publication as contained at Appendix 1 to the submitted report.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated 26 September 2024, submitted)

The Provost ruled and the Council agreed to adjourn the meeting for lunch at this point.

The Council reconvened at 1.25pm with all those present as per the sederunt with the exception of Councillor Daniel Hampsey who had left the meeting prior to the adjournment.

21. HOUSING ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT 2024

The Council gave consideration to a report presenting the Annual Assurance Statement for 2024 as required by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Decision

The Council approved the Annual Assurance Statement as contained at Appendix 1 to the submitted report.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated 26 September 2024, submitted)

Councillor Jan Brown left the meeting at this point.

22. REST AND BE THANKFUL UPDATE

The Council gave consideration to a report providing an update on the Scottish Government's announcement on the long term solution for the Rest and Be Thankful.

Decision

The Council –

1. reaffirmed its commitment to the overall position that a permanent solution for the A83 Rest and Be Thankful must be delivered and put in place as soon as possible;
2. welcomed the investments made and actions taken to date while reiterating the need for this to continue at pace given the vital significance of the route to all aspects of life in Argyll and Bute;
3. agreed that this would remain a strategic priority for the life of this Council, and;
4. agreed to continue to speak up for Argyll and Bute and its communities on this matter at every possible opportunity, directly with national government when needed as well as through the A83 Taskforce.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Roads and Infrastructure Services dated August 2024, submitted)

23. CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER REPORT 2023 - 2024

The Council gave consideration to a report presenting the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) Report for the financial year 2023-24.

Decision

The Council –

1. noted the key activities outlined in the CSWO Report 2023/2024;
2. acknowledge the continued commitment of Social Work and Social Care staff in the delivery of services; and
3. noted that the Report would be submitted to the Office of the Child Social Work Adviser to the Scottish Government.

(Reference: Report by Chief Social Work Officer dated 11 September 2024, submitted)

24. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS REPORT: 2020- 2023 REVIEW

The Council gave consideration to a report outlining the changes that had occurred since the previous Children's Rights Report in terms of legislation and obligations placed on public bodies.

Decision

The Council approved the 2022-23 Review of the Children's Rights Report.

(Reference: Report by Chief Social Work Officer dated 16 July 2024, submitted)

25. CHILD POVERTY ACTION PLAN REVIEW 2023-2024

The Council gave consideration to a report presenting the Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Plan Review for 2023 – 2024.

Decision

The Council approved the Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Plan Review for 2023 – 2024.

(Reference: Report by Chief Officer – Health and Social Care Partnership dated 12 August 2024, submitted)

26. NOTICE OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 13

The following Notice of Motion moved by Councillor Alastair Redman, seconded by Councillor Andrew Vennard was before the Council for consideration –

Condemnation of the Cuts to Winter Fuel Payments by the UK and Scottish Governments

This Council:

1. Expresses deep concern over the decision by the UK Government to cut winter fuel payments, a vital support mechanism for pensioners across the country.
2. Further condemns the Scottish Government's decision to enact the same cut, disregarding the specific needs and circumstances of Scotland's aging population, particularly in colder, rural areas like those in Argyll and Bute.
3. Recognizes that such cuts will disproportionately affect the most vulnerable among us, increasing the risk of fuel poverty among our elderly citizens during the harsh winter months.
4. Acknowledges the negative impact these cuts will have on our local communities, where many pensioners rely on these payments to heat their homes adequately.
5. Calls upon the UK Government to reconsider its decision in light of the hardship it will cause to millions of elderly citizens.
6. Urges the Scottish Government to use its devolved powers to restore these payments at least for residents in Scotland, to protect our elderly from the severe cold and associated health risks.
7. Mandates the Council Leader to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People, expressing the Council's opposition to these cuts and detailing the potential impacts on our community.
8. Requests that this motion be forwarded to all local authorities in Scotland, encouraging them to pass similar resolutions and to collectively lobby for the reversal of these decisions.

Justification:

The decision to cut winter fuel payments is not only a removal of essential financial support for our elderly but also a disregard for their health and well-being. This Council must stand firm in advocating for the needs of our residents, ensuring they are not left in the cold. By uniting with other councils, we can amplify our voice and pressure both the UK and Scottish Governments to reconsider these detrimental cuts. Let us be clear in our message: our pensioners deserve better, and we will not remain silent.

End of Motion

This motion is designed to express the Council's strong disapproval of the cuts to winter fuel payments and to initiate action that might safeguard our community's elderly population.

Amendment

The Council:

1. Recognises that decisions on benefits policy are made at a national government level without recourse to local government, which has no direct control in this regard;
2. Agrees that, while this Council does and will continue to lobby on issues of significance, as a priority the Council will focus primarily on actions that it takes to directly support people in Argyll and Bute who may be affected by these decisions, including:
 - a) Building on the work already under way by the Welfare Rights team and looking at ways the team can support and encourage uptake of benefits like Pension Credit and other benefits, where people are eligible but not currently making a claim, and where this may help them to access the help they need;
 - b) Through the multi-agency Financial Inclusion and Advice Group, established by the Council to address cost of living challenges, further exploring ways to support people to cope with cost of living challenges of various kinds.

Moved by Councillor Jim Lynch, seconded by Councillor Audrey Forrest.

As the meeting was being held on a hybrid basis, the vote required to be taken by calling the roll and Members voted as follows –

Motion

Councillor Garret Corner
Councillor Maurice Corry
Councillor Amanda Hampsey
Councillor Jennifer Kean
Councillor Tommy MacPherson
Councillor Liz McCabe
Councillor Yvonne McNeilly
Councillor Gemma Penfold
Councillor Alastair Redman
Councillor Andrew Vennard
Councillor Peter Wallace

Amendment

Councillor John Armour
Councillor Gordon Blair
Councillor Math Campbell-Sturgess
Councillor Audrey Forrest
Councillor Kieron Green
Councillor Graham Hardie
Councillor Anne Horn
Councillor Fiona Howard
Councillor Willie Hume
Councillor Andrew Kain
Councillor Paul Donald Kennedy

Councillor Reeni Kennedy-Boyle
Councillor Jim Lynch
Councillor Luna Martin
Councillor Ian James McQuire
Councillor Dougie McFadzean
Councillor Julie McKenzie
Councillor Ross Moreland
Councillor Iain Shonny Paterson
Councillor Dougie Philand
Councillor William Sinclair

Decision

The Amendment was carried by 21 votes to 11 votes and the Council resolved accordingly

(Reference: Notice of Motion by Councillor Alastair Redman, seconded by Councillor Andrew Vennard, submitted; Amendment by Councillor Jim Lynch, seconded by Councillor Audrey Forrest, tabled)

27. NOTICE OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 13

The following Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Andrew Vennard, seconded by Councillor Amanda Hampsey was before the Council for consideration –

The Council resolves and agrees as follows:

1. That an additional meeting of the Harbour Board is duly convened on Thursday 17 October 2024 (which said additional meeting of the Harbour Board is hereafter referred to as “the Meeting”);
2. That the purpose of the Meeting shall be to receive, note, and consider the Briefing Note circulated to Harbour Board Members on 10 September 2024.

Amendment

The Council:

- 1) Notes the significant works undertaken by the Council in regards to the Oban Harbour revision order, including multiple consultations, communication between Harbour Board members and officers with local groups, and direct responses to all objections raised during the consultation process.
- 2) Further notes that the matter now sits with Transport Scotland to take forward a process of written representations to assist them in advising Scottish Ministers on the next steps.
- 3) Agrees that officers be requested to submit a report to the Harbour Board updating them on the position as soon as any meaningful feedback is received from Transport Scotland in regard to the work they are currently undertaking, this further report going to a special meeting of the Board if necessary.
- 4) Notes that, with reference to the Harbour Board’s decision on 12th September that financial and other reports relating to piers, harbours and other maritime facilities managed by the Council should be prepared and provided for consideration by the

Harbour Board no later than the last ordinary meeting of the Board during the 2025 calendar year, the Chief Financial Officer has now confirmed that it would be her intention to bring these reports forward earlier, by the end of this calendar year, 2024.

Moved by Councillor Ross Moreland, seconded by Councillor John Armour.

As the meeting was being held on a hybrid basis, the vote required to be taken by calling the roll and Members voted as follows –

Motion

Councillor Garret Corner
Councillor Maurice Corry
Councillor Amanda Hampsey
Councillor Jennifer Kean
Councillor Liz McCabe
Councillor Yvonne McNeilly
Councillor Gemma Penfold
Councillor Alastair Redman
Councillor Andrew Vennard
Councillor Peter Wallace

Amendment

Councillor John Armour
Councillor Gordon Blair
Councillor Math Campbell-Sturgess
Councillor Audrey Forrest
Councillor Kieron Green
Councillor Graham Hardie
Councillor Anne Horn
Councillor Fiona Howard
Councillor Willie Hume
Councillor Andrew Kain
Councillor Paul Donald Kennedy
Councillor Reeni Kennedy-Boyle
Councillor Jim Lynch
Councillor Luna Martin
Councillor Tommy MacPherson
Councillor Ian James McQuire
Councillor Dougie McFadzean
Councillor Julie McKenzie
Councillor Ross Moreland
Councillor Iain Shonny Paterson
Councillor Dougie Philand
Councillor William Sinclair

Decision

The Amendment was carried by 22 votes to 10 votes and the Council resolved accordingly.

(Reference: Notice of Motion by Councillor Andrew Vennard, seconded by Councillor Amanda Hampsey, submitted; Amendment by Councillor Ross Moreland, seconded by Councillor John Armour, tabled)

The Council resolved in terms of Section 50(A)(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude the press and public for the following item of business on the grounds that it was likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

28. ROTHESAY PAVILION UPDATE

The Council gave consideration to a report providing an update on the Rothesay Pavilion tender position for the works to complete Stages 2 and 3 and on the latest funding position.

Decision

The Council agreed the terms of a Motion tabled by Councillor Jim Lynch, seconded by Councillor Audrey Forrest.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Commercial Services and Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth and Financial Services, submitted; and Motion by Councillor Jim Lynch, seconded by Councillor Audrey Forrest, tabled)

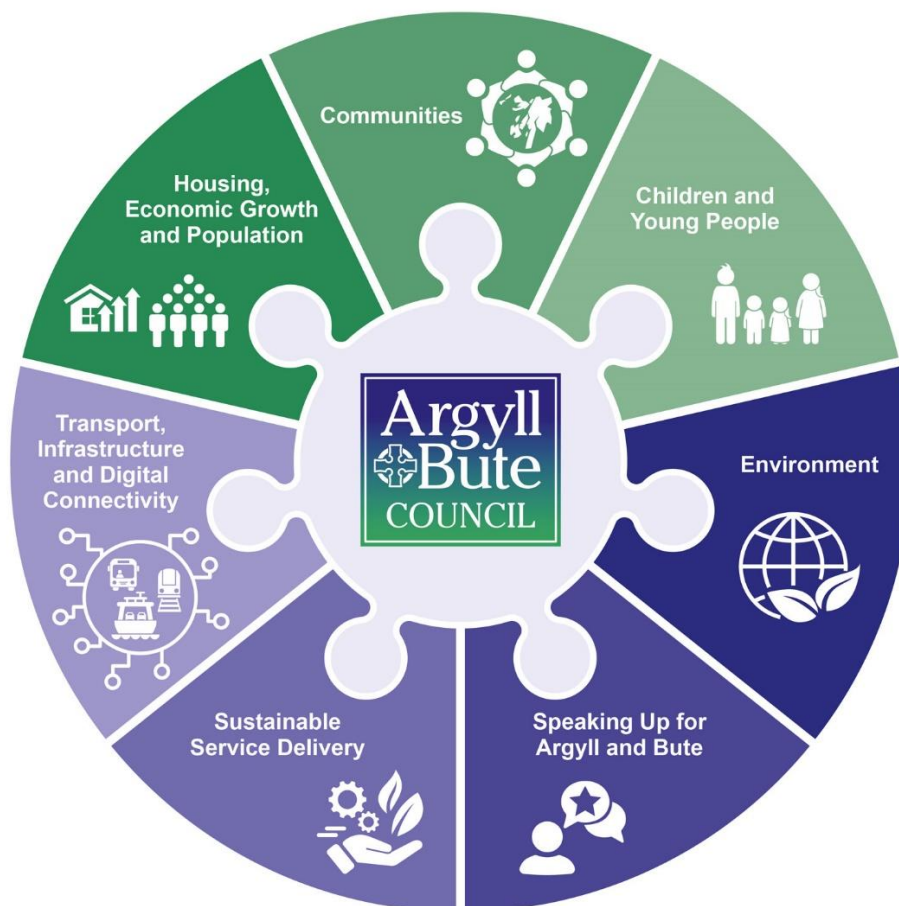
ADMINISTRATION PARTNERSHIP

ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL PRIORITIES 2024 TO 2027

Our overarching aim is clear: Argyll and Bute's economy and population need to grow. Each of our Priorities contributes to that overall goal, and all are interconnected. The need to consider these in an integrated way will remain at the forefront as we progress these Priorities.

The key themes and principles which influence and underpin all of our Priorities are:

PRINCIPLES



COMMUNITIES

Why this is a priority:

Empowered and resilient communities

Our communities are as diverse as our geography and have varying needs, challenges, and opportunities – all of which they are well placed to identify. We want to harness that local knowledge with confidence and work together to develop shared priorities. To strengthen our collaboration with and support for our communities, we will:

Priority	Next Steps/Action
Build stronger connections and collaborations with communities to increase empowerment and make the best use of local knowledge to help shape delivery of local solutions.	Meeting people where they live – progressing an engagement programme for senior leadership across and around local communities.
Enhance and deepen our understanding of local issues and improve opportunities for collaboration – including launch of the Aspiring Places: Community Projects programme in Argyll and Bute	Use online tools/digital platforms to find ways to reach those not in established groups and start ongoing conversations about local issues.
Take forward a piece of work to support Area Committees to reshape their business, decision-making and overall activities to align with existing/emerging local plans and issues, following agreement of Priorities.	Once Priorities agreed by Council – Area Committee Chairs to have initial discussion and feed back views to political leadership as first action.
Reaffirm our commitment to refugee resettlement, valuing the contribution that new families and residents make to life in Argyll and Bute.	Ensure that our approach to refugee resettlement has regard to the availability of housing, employment and skills locally while being delivered through national funding scheme.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Why this is a priority:

Making Argyll and Bute an attractive choice for families

Giving young people the best start in life, and ensuring we have the right skills for a prosperous future, are key elements of making Argyll and Bute an ideal choice for families to stay or to relocate.

The Argyll and Bute lifestyle already has much to offer and, to play our part in making that even more attractive, we will:

Priority	Next Steps/Action
Develop our school curriculums with the jobs of the future in mind, to build up a strong local skills base and help create more opportunities for young people to stay and grow in their own communities.	Look at data from across the Council to identify skills, service delivery and employment needs locally – to shape learning opportunities for the short and medium term which contribute to overall population and economic growth.
Enabling as many young people as possible go from school to positive destinations of all kinds.	Work with partners on local further and higher education provision and apprenticeship opportunities that meet identified skills, service delivery and employment needs.
Explore ways to enhance Argyll and Bute's early learning and childcare offer to support employment and business needs of local families alongside its role in nurture and contribution to access to better life chances for young people.	Identify measures to increase provision with partners.
Enable learners to take full advantage of emerging technology and to be ready for the 'jobs of the future' here in Argyll and Bute.	Pursue opportunities for investment in schools digital network – 21 st century digital network for schools and wider education infrastructure.
United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – ensuring that views of children and young people are considered in decision-making.	Developing our organisational culture to be receptive to the views of children and young people in our decision-making
Continue the programme of improvement in our schools so that they are a compelling choice for families, providing good educational attainment and supporting the wellbeing of young people.	Explore options for Education Review.

HOUSING, ECONOMIC GROWTH AND POPULATION

Why this is a priority:

Working to ensure that everyone who needs a home can find one that they can afford, in the right place, and at the right time

Access to housing is a factor in almost every aspect of Argyll and Bute’s crucial growth agenda. It contributes to the success of economic development, recruitment, employment opportunities, service delivery and much more. Argyll and Bute was the first Council in Scotland to declare a Housing Emergency. We must increase pace and be agile, ready to innovate and prepared to do things differently in order to see swift progress.

Shared prosperity and sustainable business growth in Argyll and Bute

We value the impact and return on investment that effective, targeted economic development can have. We recognise that all kinds of resources are increasingly limited and must be used to deliver shared prosperity, sustainable business growth and the best possible outcomes for Argyll and Bute

People are Argyll and Bute’s most important asset in driving forward opportunities for growth and vibrant local economies

Population growth is crucial to our economic success. Decline impacts on our ability to sustain and deliver services in the future. There is a predicted drop of 14.8% between 2018 and 2043, mainly in the 25 to 44 age group. We have a relatively tight labour market, arising from consistently higher levels of participation and low unemployment, with critical gaps in public services and key business sectors like hospitality and construction. This has been exacerbated in recent years by a decline in working-age population, migration limitations and higher levels of economic inactivity particularly in the over-50s age group.

We will:

Priority	Next Steps/Action
Sharpen focus on the Housing Emergency Action Plan and other plans/delivery bodies as appropriate in line with the pace required in emergency. Refresh and update our Local Housing Strategy.	Looking at overarching plans – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Argyll and Bute Local Housing Strategy - Strategic Housing Investment Plan - Local Development Plan - Oban and Helensburgh Development Masterplans
Use policy and fiscal levers at our disposal to speed up delivery – lobby other agencies where required. Seek reform or flexibility on use of Resource Planning Assumption (RPA).	Using latest data to reframe and target activities and resources to the right places at the right times. Revisit Strategic Housing Fund. Examine scope to reduce time spent in temporary accommodation. Lobbying work
Drive forward in partnership across all sectors to deliver on vital areas like key worker accommodation, mid-market rentals, private sector development in addition to activity on affordable homes.	Engagement and partnership working across all sectors. Local Housing Strategy review to open up greater opportunities for partnership working and securing additional resources to support swifter delivery.

	Housing Emergency Action Plan.
Explore scope for greater commercialisation of Council assets and otherwise attract external investment for the Council and communities.	<p>Build on the existing foundations to derive further commercial income from Council assets.</p> <p>Explore opportunities for Community Partnerships to divest/operate Council assets.</p> <p>Further develop the approach to community Benefits and the opportunities from planning gain for communities to augment Council funding.</p>
<p>Take a clear 'return on investment' approach to allocations of resources at all levels – prioritise action that brings people, jobs and business to Argyll and Bute through</p> <p>Maximising community benefit opportunities from local development and promote community wealth building.</p>	<p>Agree refreshed Economic Strategies.</p> <p>Development Masterplans.</p> <p>Critical evaluation of activities, financial allocations and requests and how those will translate into employment or growth.</p> <p>Use policy and fiscal levers in our power to stimulate, attract and incentivise growth – for example exploring creation of enterprise zones.</p> <p>Where power to drive growth sits with other agencies, lobby for support to complement the actions we are taking and investments we are making (e.g. fuel, transport costs in rural areas)</p> <p>Engage with Argyll and Bute's key sectors and major employers in food and drink, tourism, construction, energy and social care to progress shared priorities and work in partnership where possible.</p>
Continue to lead on bringing depopulation to national government attention.	<p>Bringing together group of depopulating local authorities to act together as collective voice.</p> <p>Engage with Scottish Ministers and Ministerial Taskforce.</p>

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

Why this is a priority:

Keeping people, businesses, goods and services moving through Argyll and Bute

Argyll and Bute’s geographic mix of rural and island communities mean that transport, infrastructure and digital connectivity are crucial jigsaw pieces in the drive for growth. At the most basic level, we need effective and reliable ways to bring people, goods and services to Argyll and Bute – and to carry our own products. Like transport connectivity, reliable, resilient digital links have a highly significant contribution to make to growing the population and the economy. They can add considerable value to Argyll and Bute’s position as an ideal choice to locate, offering an attractive lifestyle and opportunities to learn, work and do business.

In the same context we need to consider the impact of climate change on that essential infrastructure.

This particular area is complex given our geography and the range of agencies who have responsibility for maintaining the resilience of lifeline connections of all kinds. Our principles of return on investment, partnership working, and speaking up for Argyll and Bute and its people will all come into play here. We will:

Priority	Next Steps/Action
<p>Lobbying for national infrastructure investment and interventions where responsibility lies with other agencies – maintaining pressure for delivery at pace of the permanent solution for the A83 Rest and Be Thankful.</p> <p>Political lobbying for urgent action on ferry services which brings the capacity and timetabling needed to support lifeline links and routes to market.</p> <p>Representing to industry and national governments on disproportionate transport, fuel and energy costs which contribute to higher rural poverty/deprivation levels and impact on growth.</p>	<p>Establish political lobbying group (which will tackle a variety of issues), agree membership and scope.</p> <p>Agree themes/focus of political lobbying activity – including A83, Rest and Be Thankful, A82 upgrade, A85 improvements.</p> <p>Constructive engagement with Scottish and UK Government Ministers.</p> <p>Find ways to join our voice with those of communities who tell us this is a priority for them too.</p>
<p>Seek full funding for delivery of internal ferry services, given that responsibility for these sits with Transport Scotland.</p>	<p>Pursue formal request for full funding, noting previous shortfall.</p>
<p>Use strong data to develop a Transport Strategy which recognises the significance of connectivity to population and economic growth.</p>	<p>Explore options for full transport study (which can include looking at integration, organisation options) following RIS Review.</p>

ENVIRONMENT

Why this is a priority:

The Council has already declared a climate emergency and must continue to keep this issue as a primary consideration

Recognising the importance of climate change is a key factor when we consider how we do business as well as the impact of our geography.

The Council has already committed to achieving 75% carbon reduction by 2030 and net zero before 2045.

We will:

Priority	Next Steps/Action
Reduce carbon emissions generated by the Council. Agree policies in relation to waste, recycling and other environmental issues, which will inform next steps. Evaluate Council targets for deliverability and improvement.	After agreement of policies, agree and implement SMART measures.
Harness opportunities from expansion of renewable energy sector in the area	Explore potential community/Council benefits from renewables projects. Revisit exploration of renewables projects on Council land.

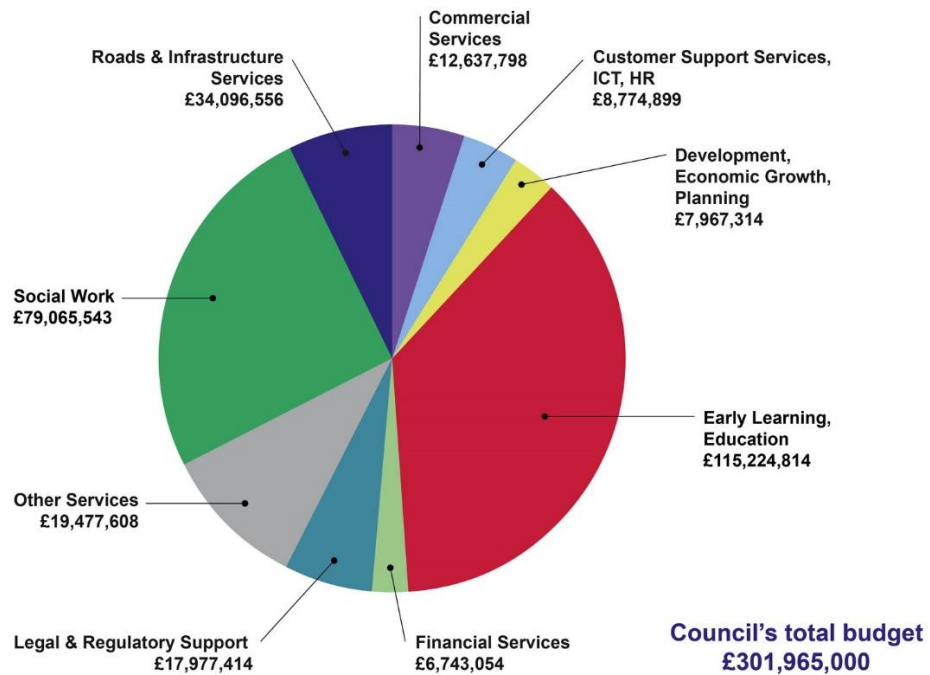
SUSTAINABLE SERVICE DELIVERY

Why this is a priority:

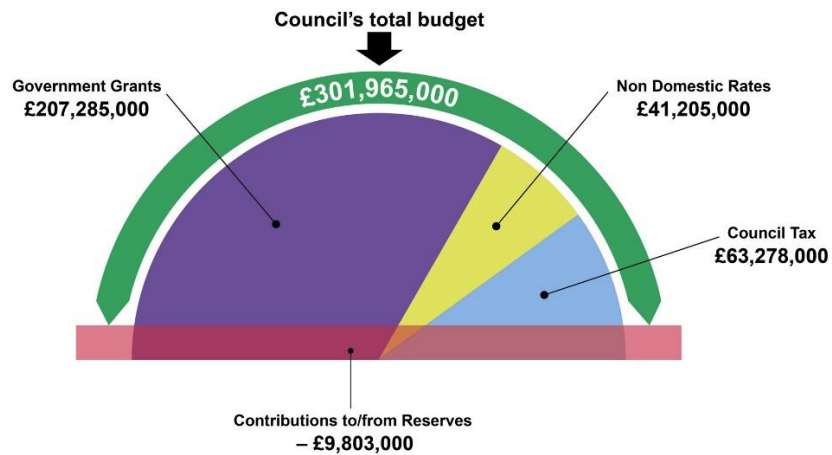
We want to provide the best services we can for the money and resources available – and make clear the standards that our communities can expect. We know that this is really important to local people.

Over the remainder of this Council term, local government finances and resources of all kinds will be under more pressure than they've ever been. Resource levels will inevitably inform service standards and delivery. We need to be more vigilant than ever before about alignment of investment and action to our priorities. Identifying clear returns and outcomes for Argyll and Bute, from allocations of resources, must be the starting point of action or investment.

BUDGET BY SERVICE AREA



HOW COUNCIL SERVICES ARE FUNDED



Fiscal constraints have put pressure on services and limit what we can deliver. It is important that our models of service delivery are more efficient and more effective, with clear and achievable standards. We want to transform services efficiently and at pace, and in ways that align with the resources we have – a Council fit for the future.

We will:

Priority	Next Steps/Action
Provide the best services we can with the money available.	Expand the RIS Review approach to other service areas to ensure we have the most effective and efficient delivery models possible. Develop proposals to expand and make the most of digital/technology, including further exploration of AI.
Make clear the service standards that communities can expect with the resources available.	Review, update, communicate clear quality service standards that match with local needs as well as available resources.
Completion and implementation of the Roads and Infrastructure Services (RIS) Review, particularly creation of robust, reliable data to inform decisions.	Progress and implement RIS Review.
Play our part in calling for a fair deal for councils – including asks for greater flexibilities at local level which helps better serve community needs.	Part of work of political lobbying group.

SPEAKING UP FOR ARGYLL AND BUTE, ITS PEOPLE AND ITS COMMUNITIES

Why this is a priority:

Collective, as well as collaborative, action is necessary to deliver growth on the scale that Argyll and Bute needs

No single agency alone can deliver on Argyll and Bute's overarching aim of significant, vital population and economic growth.

We will work in partnership with communities, with all sectors, and at all levels as far as possible to progress Argyll and Bute's priorities.

This will include using our voice as the local authority to call for action where responsibility lies outwith our control or influence.

We will:

Priority	Next Steps/Action
Call for policy, investment, flexibility, action - wherever there is a key issue impacting on Argyll and Bute's chances of growth and success and where responsibility sits outwith the control of the Council.	Establish political lobbying group, agree membership, themes, areas for focus as set out throughout the Priorities.
Add our voice as the local authority to those of our communities when they are speaking out on issues that are important to them and where external action is needed.	Identify needs and opportunities through engagement programme and planned online/digital democracy activities.
Lobby for more investment in digital connectivity to boost Argyll and Bute's status as an attractive place to live.	Lobby for digital connectivity improvements to fill the gap in terms of other opportunities which are available and funded elsewhere in Scotland, but which are not practical here due to geography (e.g. active travel).