

BUDGET CONSULTATION

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Argyll and Bute Council aims to work with, as well as for, the people of Argyll and Bute. This report sets out a consultation exercise that will give our communities the opportunity to contribute to transforming the work of the council.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Members are recommended to agree that the council carries out the consultation exercise proposed in this report, noting that the presentation of the consultation will be developed prior to publication.

3.0 DETAIL

- 3.1 The council carries out budget consultation exercises to ensure that communities have the opportunity to engage in the process of setting the council budget, and transforming our work.
- 3.2 The consultation set out in Appendix 1 asks for views on service planning and on getting involved in our work. It provides examples of how responses given to previous consultations have made a difference to decisions and actions of the council.
- 3.3 In order to encourage as representative a response as possible, the consultation will be available for feedback in a number of ways:
- on the council's website
 - via our Citizens' Panel
 - in printed copies available from council offices
- 3.4 In addition we will draw upon the support of our Third Sector Interface (TSI) partners in reaching people whose voices may not be heard as easily as others.
- 3.5 The consultation will be publicised through our website, weekly news round up, and social media channels. It will also be promoted to employees through our internal communication channels.
- 3.6 It will run from 13 November 2017 to 2nd January 2018.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The consultation set out in Appendix 1 is intended to deliver views from the community that will support the council in transforming its work.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1/2 Policy/Financial: Feedback from the consultation will be reported to elected members to consider in transforming the work of the council.

5.3 Legal : None

5.4 HR : None

5.5 Equalities :The consultation is designed to reach a wide range of people in line with our duties under the Equality Act 2010.

5.6 Risk: none

5.7 Customer Service: Providing feedback on actions taken as a result of this consultation will highlight the value of citizens taking the time to respond.

Douglas Hendry
Executive Director – Customer Services

22 September 2017

For further information contact:

Jane Fowler, Head of Improvement and HR; 01546 604466

Jane Jarvie, Communications Manager, 01546 604323

Policy Lead: Councillor Rory Colville – Policy Lead for Corporate Services

Appendix 1: Public consultation exercise

Appendix 1: Service planning for our future – consultation 2017-2018

Every day Argyll and Bute Council provides services that support our youngest, our oldest and our most vulnerable residents; and build the economic growth that will bring the people and jobs on which the future of our area depends.

Every year reduced funding makes this more and more difficult to achieve.

Over the past few years, with your help, we have made choices that are transforming the work of the council.

With reduced funding though we can't continue to work the way we have in the past.

We must find different ways in which to support our communities and the area as a whole. This is what this consultation is about.

We are asking for your views on making the most of the assets we have. We would also like to hear more from you about how you would like to get involved in making the changes you'd like to see in your community.

We'd love to do everything our communities want us to, but funding cuts mean that that just isn't possible.

Please do take a few minutes to let us know how you would like to work with us to support the communities and future of Argyll and Bute.

Councillor Aileen Morton
Leader of Argyll and Bute Council

Argyll and Bute's challenge

80% of our funding is provided by the Scottish Government. Our Scottish Government funding has reduced year on year and is expected to fall further this year:

- In 2018/19 alone our budget gap is estimated to be between £0.9 million and £8.5 million
- Over the next three years, we will need to find savings expected to be between £11.1 million and £33.9 million.

Our geography brings with it great opportunities, for lifestyle and economic growth. It also brings significant challenges for funding and delivering services:

- We have the highest number of inhabited islands of all of Scotland's local authorities
- We have schools, offices, and employees distributed across the second largest area of all of Scotland's councils
- In addition to making savings, we must invest in our economy to attract the people and jobs that will build prosperity for the area.

You can find information on how our budget is spent in Appendix 1.

The consultation is split into two sections.

Section 1: Service planning

- Service priorities
- Making the most of our resources

Section 2: Getting involved in Argyll and Bute's services

- Supporting the services you want for your community
- Promoting the area to attract people and jobs

Section 1: Service planning

With your help, we have made progress in changing how we work to protect services and build a prosperous future for the area.

Here are just some of the actions the council is taking to stretch our funding and transform how we work.

We have:

- Reduced the cost of what we do by millions of pounds over the past 7 years, and have identified a further £620,000 efficiencies for 2018/19.
- Attracted over £17 million of external funding to the area since 2014.
- Managed our finances as effectively as possible to allow more money to be spent on services, for example we are on track to reduce charges for loans (which fund our investment in regeneration among other things) by nearly £4 million between 2016 and 2019.
- Transformed how we make services available for example by creating 'Live Argyll', the charitable trust that will deliver leisure and library services.
- We have put into action as many as possible of the suggestions you have given through previous consultations. You can find examples in Appendix 2.

Service planning

Last year we asked you which services are most important for the council to deliver. We would like to know if your priorities remain the same.

Question 1: Which of these services is most important for the council to deliver?

(Please indicate your top 3 priorities)

- Care for vulnerable people
- Customer and information services (eg website, enquiries, advice services)
- Economic development/business support services
- Education for adults
- Education for children
- Environmental services (eg recycling, refuse, street cleaning, flooding protection)
- Job opportunities
- Public transport
- Regulatory services (eg planning, trading standards, environmental health)
- Roads
- Other (please specify)

Funding cuts year after year make it more and more difficult to protect services and jobs. In Appendix 1 you can find information on some of the steps the council has taken to match our budget to the priorities of our communities.

We must make more savings. In 2018/19 alone our budget gap is estimated to be between £0.9 million and £8.5 million. Over the next three years, we will need to find savings expected to be between £11.1 million and £33.9 million.

We have identified savings options that would help us bridge this year's funding gap. You can find out about them here [link to table of savings information].

Question 2: Please let us know the options you most support (please indicate as many as matter to you)

Question 3: Please let us know the options you would most like to avoid (please indicate as many as matter to you)

Question 4: What suggestions do you have for other ways of making savings?

The council employs a wide range of professions, with skills and knowledge that are transferrable from the council to other businesses and services. We have everything from digital, planning or customer services, to project management, catering or event experience. Question 1 gives an idea of the range of services we provide, and you can find out more on our website's A-Z. (link to be added).

Question 5: What services/advice/training do you think other organisations, businesses or groups might buy from the council?

Making the most of our resources

Thank you for suggestions given in previous consultations on how we can make best possible use of our resources. Appendix 2 gives you an idea of how we have put suggestions into action. We would welcome your ideas again.

Question 6: how should the council cut costs and raise income?

Section 2: Getting involved

We would love to be able to do everything our communities want, but drastically reduced funding means that that just is not possible.

Last time we asked you if you would be interested in getting involved in the work of the council.

More people indicated an area in which they would like to get involved, or said they didn't know, than said no to being involved.

We are therefore developing a volunteer strategy, and would like your views on how we could make this of use and benefit to residents and communities.

Getting involved - supporting the services you want for your community

Question 7: If you were to get involved in delivering services for your community, what would you like to get from this?

- Work experience
- Make a difference to life in my community
- Training
- Work with other people
- Work outdoors
- Work indoors
- Other (please explain)

Question 8: How often would you consider getting involved?

Regularity

- Monthly
- Weekly
- Daily
- Other

Time

- During the day
- Evenings
- Weekends
- Other

As highlighted in question 1 the council provides a wide range of services that require different experience, skills and knowledge.

Question 9: In which areas of our work would you be interested in getting involved?

Question 10: If you are not interested in getting involved, it would be good to know why.

Getting involved – promoting the area for people and jobs

We need to attract people and jobs to the area, to secure funding and people to deliver public services, and to achieve the prosperity that will give our children and grandchildren a future in Argyll and Bute.

We know from your answers to previous consultations that you agree that there are many reasons to be proud of what Argyll and Bute has to offer.

Promoting the opportunities and successes of Argyll and Bute and the people who live and work here is key to encouraging others to live, learn, work and visit us.

The council promotes Argyll and Bute in different ways, for example through digital and print media and word of mouth.

Question 11: what makes you most proud of Argyll and Bute?

- The people who live here
- Scenery
- Lifestyle
- Community spirit
- Community safety
- Economic strengths (eg food and drink, tourism)
- Other

Question 12: how do/could you help promote Argyll and Bute as a great place to live, learn, work and do business?

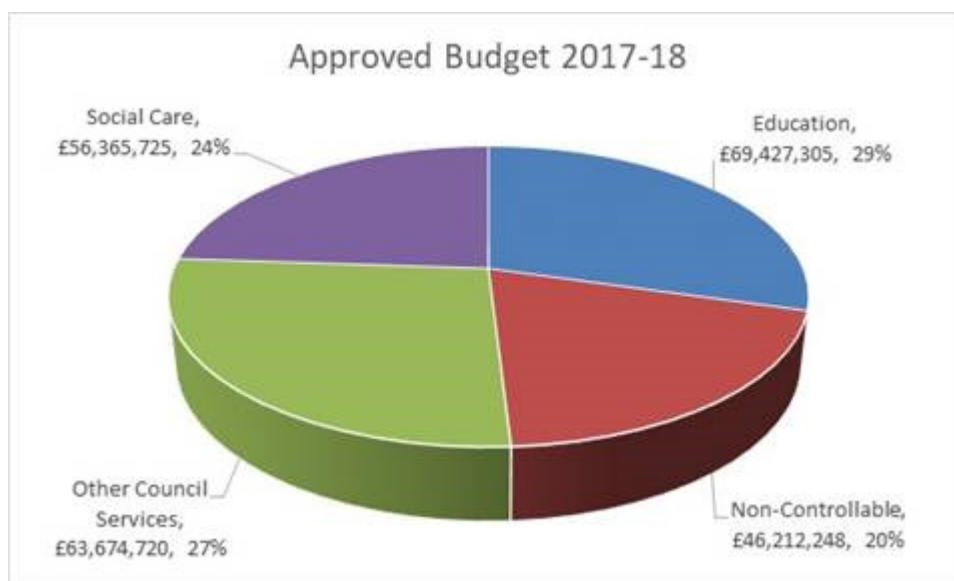
- Social media
- Word of mouth
- Inspire others (eg tourists/customers) to promote a positive experience of the area
- Other
- Don't know

Question 13: is there anything the council could do to help you promote Argyll and Bute as a great place to live, learn, work and do business?

- No
- Yes (please explain what)

Appendix 1: How our budget is spent

Here is what the council's budget provides.



We have worked hard to match spending to the priorities of our communities now, and of the area into the future. Please find below examples of actions we have taken, in response to previous consultations.

You said	We did
Investing in the future Investing to create jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We put in place a £75 million package of measures to develop our economy and attract people and jobs. We established the Argyll, Lomond and Islands Rural Regeneration Initiative. We are regenerating and restoring our key towns - Campbeltown, Helensburgh, Oban, Rothesay, Dunoon, Tarbert and Lochgilphead. We launched the well-received Rural Resettlement Fund for people or businesses moving to the area.
Education services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We dedicate more funding to education services than to any other area of work.
The road network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have dedicated over £60 million in the past six years to the road network.
Deliver a wide range of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We spread savings and efficiencies across a range of our services, for example, removing vacant posts or reducing print and postage costs.

Appendix 2: Suggestions for raising income and making savings

Here are just some examples of how your suggestions have helped the council make savings and raise income.

You said	We did
Raising Income	
Chase debts/reduce benefit fraud	Argyll and Bute Council's Corporate Fraud Investigation Team recovered over £130,000 in 2016/17.
Charge for services	We are charging for various services from parking to pre-planning advice.
Become commercial - provide services the public can buy	<p>We are expanding the range of services we can offer on a commercial basis.</p> <p>We would welcome your ideas through this consultation on how we can continue to develop commercial services.</p>
Learn from good practice in other councils	We have considered steps being taken by councils across the UK. In addition employees and councillors from this council sit on different national groups, and work with other authorities, in sharing best practice.
Savings	
Recycle more	We changed the refuse collection service in 2016, prioritising recycling, and have already seen an increase.
Encourage on-line services rather than face to face	We deliver many services on-line. You can find out more on our website – www.argyll-bute.gov.uk
Reduce loan charges	We have reduced charges for loans (which fund for example our investment in regeneration) by £1 million in 2016/17, another £0.8 million in 2017/18, and are on track to reduce costs by a further £2 million in 2018/19.
Provide pool cars to reduce mileage expenses.	We are doing this.
Provide more on-line training	We are making training available on-line wherever possible in order to save staff travel time and costs.
Working together	
Ask communities to see how communities can help you/empower communities to look after their community.	Following your response to last year's consultation, we are exploring options for volunteering in local government, and would welcome your responses to questions 5 -8 of this consultation.