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Foreward

We are pleased to present Argyll and Bute Council's annual report for 2016-17 where you will find clear evidence of our determination to deliver the best services that we can.

The last year has been one of change. The local council elections took place in May and a new council is in place.

What has not changed is the desire to continue to deliver a wide range of high quality services to all communities across Argyll and Bute, from our larger towns to our 23 inhabited islands.

Each year our services focus on making Argyll and Bute a place people choose to live, learn, work and do business. This year is no exception and, within this report, you will find examples of our achievements and successes, either through our own innovations or through the successful partnership working in which Argyll & Bute has a strong track record.

This report highlights the council's last budget in February 2017, balanced and delivered in the context of reduced funding. All Scottish local authorities will, for the foreseeable future, have challenging decisions to make in the face of reducing available finance, parallel to growing demand for services.

Nonetheless, looking forward, we are ambitious for our council and for Argyll and Bute. We will continue to support investment in our economy and grow the population, working with partners to drive forward further improvement in how we deliver our services.

Our activities and our business will remain focused on our key objectives as follows;

- The economy is diverse and thriving
- Infrastructure that supports sustainable growth
- Education skills and training maximise opportunities for all
- Children and young people have the best possible start
- People live active, healthier and independent lives
- People live in safer and stronger communities



Councillor Aileen Morton
Leader of Argyll and Bute Council



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Sneddon', on a light-colored background.

Cleland Sneddon
Chief Executive

The Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement Plan (ABOIP)

Argyll and Bute's economic success is built on a growing population and according to the National Records of Scotland, the population of the area increased last year to over 87,000.

The council supports the work of Argyll and Bute's Community Planning Partnership (CPP) and works with its community planning partners; NHS Highland, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Argyll College UHI, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Natural Heritage, Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface, Department for Work and Pensions, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park and Skills Development Scotland.

Each of the partners is committed to delivering on the six long term outcomes listed in the Foreword of this report, which support the Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement Plan.

Over the past year, the council and its partners have been delivering on projects that address gaps where normal single organisation delivery does not meet needs that communities identify to us.

These projects include:

- Looking at opportunities for joint recruitment with partners working together to promote positions within the area.
- Introducing Police Scotland Youth Engagement Officers within designated secondary schools
- Looking at ways to address issues in acute mental health response including patient transport.

The CPP has also been preparing for the new requirements of the Community Empowerment Act. This has involved the re-naming of the Single Outcome Agreement to Argyll and Bute's Outcome Improvement Plan, and is also involving the development of local partnership action plans with the Area Community Planning Groups.

Over the past year the council has led a working group to ensure it is prepared for new powers to communities within the Community Empowerment Act. More information on the Act and the different parts of this including participation requests, community planning and asset transfer can be found on our dedicated webpages: <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/community-empowerment>

More information on Community Planning can be found in its annual reports available from: <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/council-and-government/community-planning-partnership>

The economy is diverse and thriving

Ensuring Argyll and Bute remains a great place to live, visit, invest and work continues to be a strategic priority for the council and a wide range of stakeholders. This is being done through initiatives such as the Rural Resettlement Fund and exploring an integrated approach to recruitment with the Community Planning Partnership.

Key Successes

The Business Gateway team provided advice to help 104 new businesses get started. The number of new businesses which started and continued to operate for at least a year was 86% in Argyll and Bute which is 6% higher than the national average. The number of new businesses which started and continued to operate for at least three years was 70% which is 3% more than the national average.

In partnership with Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Business Gateway delivered the first Argyll Enterprise Week in Oban, inspiring, informing and connecting businesses. The event exceeded expectations, with more than 500 participants taking part in 29 events.

Festival is sweet for Helensburgh's chocolatier

A former Army medical professional formed her own chocolate business with support from Business Gateway Argyll and Bute.

Melanie Neil launched CocoaMo in 2014 providing artisan chocolates, some using local and organic ingredients, and single origin cocoa. She has since sold her chocolates in local delicatessens, at events in Loch Lomond and Glasgow, as well as securing a constant stream of orders via her website. As one of six winners of a Business Gateway competition to win a trade stand, Melanie showcased her artisan chocolates at the Best of the West Festival in September 2016.

Melanie said: "After taking early retirement from my medical profession, it was always my ambition to learn everything about chocolate and to master the techniques of a professional Chocolatier.

"I was keen to make Business Gateway my first stop before I launched CocoaMo, as I had no previous business experience. My advisor was a wealth of information, providing me with details from accounting to food standards contacts. This help, along with everything I learned from attending the free courses Business Gateway hosted has been invaluable to me and CocoaMo's growth.



Consultation and Engagement

The Economic Growth Team supported Food from Argyll to grow its membership, set up a Food Assembly in Oban and carried out a study to explore options for promotional events and interest in developing a digital distribution solution for a food and drink delivery service.

We asked suppliers whether they knew how to find out about opportunities to do work for the council. Following feedback we introduced local procurement surgeries to tell local suppliers about upcoming tender opportunities.

The council awarded 68% of its contracts to local companies in 2016/17 with a total value of £7.6m.

Five customer surveys were undertaken across the specific areas of debt counselling, licensing standards, private landlord registration, trading standards programmed inspections, trading standards service requests, environmental health programmed inspections and environmental health service requests.

As a 'film friendly' council we offer free and confidential advice to the film, television and photographic industries with 41 productions, including Netflix, the ITV drama Loch Ness and BBC comedy West Skerra Light, using Argyll and Bute as a location.

We secured over £2.5 million of funding to regenerate the Gleaner site in Ardrishaig, Tobermory Light Industrial Site and the Oban Bay Transit Berthing Facility.



Kick start for stalled spaces

Gap sites in Campbeltown, Lochgilphead, Tarbert, Oban, Rothesay and Helensburgh have been given facelifts and brought back into temporary use by their local communities thanks to funding from Stalled Spaces Scotland and support from Argyll and Bute's Economic Development service.

The £3.3 million regeneration of Hermitage Park in Helensburgh began in early 2017 with an initial focus on the landscape and conservation works. This project will deliver significant physical improvements to the infrastructure as well as the services on offer in the park for residents and visitors to the area and will be an excellent resource for the local community. The project will be delivered in partnership with the community and key user groups and in particular with the Friends of Hermitage Park Association.

Consultation and Engagement

We worked in partnership with Helensburgh Community Council and agreed it would carry out some aspects of maintenance work in the town's Colquhoun Square.

Changing the face of Helensburgh

Since 2014, shopfronts in Helensburgh have been having a facelift thanks to an agreement worth £140,000 between the council and Drum Development, the developers of the Waitrose site in the town.

The shopfront enhancement scheme was introduced to give businesses help in improving the character and appearance of their buildings.

Grants have assisted with new signage and shutters, canopies and storm doors, and double glazing. Business owners are provided with support from members of the economic development service at every stage of the process.

The main focus of the fund is to help local businesses grow and attract people into the town, whether as residents or visitors. This is a key part of the wider regeneration of Helensburgh.

Anne Mitchell, of Anne of Loudounville, who has used the scheme, said: “We all want the town to come alive again and to be welcoming. The town is improving and this is partly due to the work being done by the council. If you want to encourage tourism you have to have the place looking smart and nice.”



MoD Strategic Development Framework

Last year saw the UK Government commit to significant investment in HM Naval Base Clyde between 2018 and 2032, as the UK's single submarine base. This will involve the relocation of 1400 military personnel to HMNB Clyde bringing the compliment to 4,800 by 2020 and an increase in civilian support and construction staff.

Discussions have taken place between the Royal Navy, MoD, Argyll and Bute Council, Scottish Enterprise and other Community Planning Partners in order to establish strong and meaningful lines of communication in order that collective planning and management of the changes to come can be delivered to best effect.

In February 2017 the Secretary of State for Scotland, along with the Naval Base Commander and the Chief Executive of Argyll & Bute Council, signed the Strategic Delivery and Development Framework to: provide the framework for an enduring and mutually supportive relationship between HM Naval Base Clyde and Argyll and Bute

Community Planning Partnership to achieve maximum benefit for the Base and the wider community of Argyll and Bute.

Conservation Area Regeneration Schemes

A Townscape Heritage Initiative-led project to repair a tenement at 50-52 Main Street, Campbeltown, picked up the Best Outstanding Project award at the Scottish Empty Homes Awards. This was truly a partnership project, involving the council and the private sector, to save an historic building and bring empty flats and retail units back into use.



The Campbeltown Townscape Heritage Initiative was completed in June 2016 with the successful renovation of the Town Hall and 50-52 Main Street/Cross Street.

The regeneration of Inveraray through the Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) has breathed new life into the town. The ambitious conservation of the distinctive and important buildings was made possible by the council's contribution of £350,000 and the CARS funding of £970,000 awarded by Historic Environment Scotland (HES).

The total budget, which included contributions from the owners, Argyll Community Housing Association and private sector housing grant, is over £2million.

Four of five priority buildings, The Town House, Chamberlain's House, The Old Temperance Hotel and Relief Land have been given a new lease of life by being restored to their former glory. Work on the fifth, Arkland, will be complete later in 2017.

Following a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, for a second phase Rothesay Townscape Heritage the development phase was successfully completed and a stage two bid for £1.9million was submitted in March 2017. Following approval of this bid and also a funding bid to Historic Environment Scotland funding £500,000, this second project will start in October 2017.

Our Economic Development Transformation Projects and Regeneration team secured £1m of funding from Historic Environment Scotland for a Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme in Dunoon. The council will contribute £500,000 which, together with contributions from the owners, will create a common fund of around £2 million.

Eleven projects across Tarbert, Lochgilphead and Ardrishaig have been shortlisted to be considered for a share of the £3 million fund aimed at regenerating the areas, boosting the local economy and creating jobs.

Consultation and Engagement

Key stakeholders were asked to consider the redesign of Catering and Cleaning Services on Islay. The community saw this as a positive step forward, and in the longer term become a community owned social enterprise. It was agreed to progress with the work to develop a shared services model for catering and cleaning services on Islay.

We consulted with Connel Community Council following planning decisions and key staff explained the processes, gave a presentation on the planning system and engagement and held a public question and answer session

We consulted on a new Biodiversity Toolkit & Technical Working Note, aimed at planners, developers and householders thinking about new-builds, renovations or extensions, to help them protect, enhance conserve and restore our biodiversity during the planning and development process. This has now been published on the council website.

Touching down at Westminster

The case for locating the UK's first spaceport near Campbeltown touched down at Westminster, when a delegation from the council and DiscoverSpace UK attended a parliamentary reception hosted by the area's local MP, Brendan O'Hara.

Their mission was to explain to leading players in the aerospace industry, MPs and members of the House of Lords why the Kintyre site is the best location for the spaceport.



The UK Space Industry is projected to create up to 100,000 jobs by 2030, and the consortium aims to bring some of these jobs to our area, growing the economy and attracting even more people to live and work here.

Key challenges

We continue to work with private and third sector partners to develop and review the revised waste management strategy to ensure best value for the council and our communities, and help us meet national recycling targets.

We will recruit a qualified project manager to conduct the review and support the ongoing work looking at business development opportunities.

Publications on transport and digital connectivity show the scale of transformational change required beyond the scope of the council and the wider Argyll economy or Community Planning Partners.

We have identified that UK and Scottish Government interventions will be necessary and we are working to convince both governments of the merits of a business case that will enable

sufficient funding to be released in order to realise economic potential. Forming part of the Rural Regeneration Initiative will be the Single Investment Plan containing the critical projects essential to deliver transformational economic change and help address population challenges.

We have infrastructure that supports sustainable growth

Key Successes

Grant funding was received from the Scottish Government to develop a pilot self-build Simplified Planning Zone on two housing sites.

Recycling has increased across Argyll and Bute and £500,000 has been saved by introducing three weekly waste collection.

The council won two gold awards for the most waste electrical and electronic equipment recycled per head of population, with the community recycling centre in Oban being the most improved month-on-month collector in the country.

Consultation and Engagement

Local Development Plan (LDP) Supplementary Guidance was on public consultation for six weeks in November/December 2016. Comments were made by members of the public and a wide range of private sector agencies on a variety of planning policies. As a result we made amendments to policies which were approved by the Scottish Government and have now been adopted for use in the planning application process.

The LDP Call for Sites was held in June to December 2016. Approximately 80 sites were proposed for inclusion within the next Local Development Plan. We have begun to assess the sites for their suitability and are consulting with key agencies before making initial decisions before the end of 2017.

The LDP Call for Ideas and Place Standard Tool was held between March and May 2017. Over 400 submissions were made utilising the online Place Standard Tool. Analysis of these is ongoing and will result in a report by community planning, and will feed into the Main Issues Report for the next LDP.

Argyll and Bute Council seeks to use a strong evidence base in the preparation of Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2). This is to ensure that the resultant plan is robust, credible, and deliverable and supports both the settlement strategy and Community Plan objectives. One element of this evidence base is the Planning and Regulatory Services, Call for Sites between June and December 2016. The process was aimed at working collaboratively with developers to identify potential sites to meet the various land allocation requirements in the plan period.

The Call for Sites was widely publicised through a variety of means including emails, presentations as well as the council's website and social media. All of the sites have been digitised into the Geographic Information System (GIS) allowing for spatial cross referencing against a range of existing data such as flood risk zones and European designations. The information submitted by the site promoters has been 'joined' to the GIS data to create a powerful mapping system for internal officers to view the sites online alongside the corresponding submission information.

Deliverability has been a key theme running through the Call for Sites process recognising the need to consider important infrastructure factors in the promotion and assessment of sites.

The newly built Rest and be Thankful turning circle is now in full use by the bus operator and ensures safe pick up and drop of passengers.

Officers worked with the local community in Innellan to address concerns and identify a new bus stop location.

We received one of the best customer satisfaction rates from the national Building Standards survey run by the Scottish Government.

We successfully retained our private sector contract to provide the Building Standards verification service at Faslane and Coulport naval bases and undertook vetting services for the City of Edinburgh Council.

We continue to deliver third party grounds maintenance contracts in Kintyre and on Islay. Our street cleanliness exceeds both our target and the national benchmark, keeping Argyll and Bute clean and tidy, boosting the local economy and supporting tourism.

CHORD project continues to improve our town centres

CHORD, our multi-million pound initiative to make major improvements to the town centres and waterfronts of Campbeltown, Helensburgh, Oban, Rothesay and Dunoon is ongoing.

The refurbishment of the Queens Hall in Dunoon, along with public realm works and environmental improvements, will see a total investment of £11million.

The CHORD public realm work in Oban was completed.



The North Pier Pontoons opened for business ahead of schedule at the end of July 2017. This high-quality, new transit berth has been designed to complement Oban's existing marine facilities and it is estimated the increase in visitor numbers it will generate will be worth around £20million to the area over the next 25 years.

The council has invested £1.5m in the project which has been matched by £700,000 invested by the Scottish Government and £300,000 by HIE.

The facility comprises 15 finger berth pontoons, three hammer heads, and 12 fully serviced floating concrete breakwaters.

Work on the associated maritime visitor facility, costing £1.6 million, is ongoing and is scheduled to be completed later this year. This facility will provide a harbormaster's office, toilets, showers, lockers and a changing area as well as commercial space for rent.

Currently around 15 cruise ships a year visit Oban. By creating better facilities the prediction is that this will bring even more



vessels in the years to come as they have easier access to the town. The facility will also cater for other marine traffic such as kayakers, yachters, tour operators and sea-life enthusiasts.

Additional public realm works in Helensburgh Town Centre, funded from CHORD underspend started.

In partnership with Scotland's Urban Regeneration Forum, £25,000 of funding was secured from the Scottish Government to undertake a series of events giving the public, local businesses and community groups the opportunity to have their say about the future of Dunoon, to help develop a regeneration action plan.

Our employees won a Gold Award at the Employee Excellence Awards 2016 for their Catering IT Connectivity Project in the Service Innovation and Improvement category.

154 affordable new homes were built at a cost of £22.7 million. This is 40% more than the annual benchmark target of 110.

48 Empty Homes in the private sector were brought back into use set against an annual target of 25.

183 private sector housing adaptations were carried with a total grant investment from the Private Sector Housing Grant of £848,448.

214 properties were improved with 293 individual energy efficiency measures between them following the award of the Home Energy Efficiency Programme Area Based Schemes grant of £1,055,776

The Property Design Team was successful at the Sustainable Design Awards and received a Commendation Award for works at Tayvallich Primary School.

Roads and Amenity Services completed its capital programme to time and within budget, improving identified key routes throughout the area.

The improvements to street lighting infrastructure, with the LED replacement project, continue.

Bridge inspection work has been carried out ahead of target and other remedial works completed.

Knock Bridge on Mull was successfully repaired, allowing heavy vehicles to continue to use it again.

Council-operated ferries; Jura to Islay; Luing to Seil; Lismore to Port Appin and Easdale to Seil operated to timetable above the target of 90%.

3,664 passengers travelled on Argyll Air Services from Oban airport, which is operated by the council.

A new Miss Hoolie finds her home on Mull

In September 2016 the council's first 60kw wind turbine project was successfully delivered and became operational at land to the rear of the waste management facility at Glengorm on the island of Mull. This project is just one of the many renewable energy projects being delivered by the council. The wind turbine was named Miss Hoolie following a naming competition involving the local primary schools on Mull.

This project was delivered in partnership between the council's economic development, waste and property services along with contractors, Absolute Solar and Wind.



Local primary school children were invited to enter a Name the Turbine competition. The prize included having their name etched on a specially designed plaque to commemorate the installation, and a cheque of £500 to support the school's Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) projects.

The winner, Cailean McClean from P7 in Tobermory Primary School, suggested the name Miss Hoolie. When asked what inspired the name Cailean said: "Because this was a 'Balamory' character and 'hoolie' is Scottish for very windy."

Inveraray Masterplan

The council's Local Development Plan has recognised the aspirations of Argyll Estates to release almost 9 hectares of land for housing, business, tourism and community uses. The local development plan includes a Masterplan to make sure the historic environment is protected and the town's unique character is maintained.

The plan provides for a range of commercial uses focused around the main car park and up to 180 houses, community uses and open space. By establishing individual character areas, parameters for height and density, and building design guidance, prospective future developers will know what is expected and how their development should fit within the overall vision for the Masterplan area.

The production of the Masterplan has been a collaborative process lead by the council, involving the estate owner and their agents, Historic Environment Scotland, Transport Scotland, Architecture + Design Scotland and other consultation bodies. The process has also involved consultation with local people, businesses and the Inveraray Community Council.

The Masterplan has been developed over the last four years and will take some considerable time to complete, possibly requiring 15 to 20 years. 12 affordable homes and a supermarket have already been completed and a further phase of affordable housing is under consideration.

Dunbeg Masterplan

The Dunbeg Masterplan was approved by the Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee (PPSL) in April 2017, becoming a significant material consideration in the determination of subsequent planning applications. The Masterplan was developed as part of the “Lorn Arc” proposals and provides a framework for the delivery of up to 605 dwellings, mixed commercial and business development, and essential infrastructure improvements on land between Ganavan and Dunbeg.

Applicants, local councillors and external agencies drove the project forward in a collaborative manner. Local members and a wide range of internal and external stakeholders sit on strategic and operational boards which have been set up to assist the delivery of this development. These boards meet on a regular basis to provide both strategic overview and the opportunity for detailed discussions. This has enabled constructive engagement between all parties in moving the masterplan forward and should ensure a similarly collaborative approach to envisaged future planning applications.

In addition, the partnership has engaged with Scottish Government and Highlands and Islands Enterprise with a view to potentially joint funding the up-front infrastructure which will be the key to unlocking this strategic development.

The Strategic Transportation Unit secured over £700,000 of external capital for transportation infrastructure projects including Cycling Walking Safer Streets, Sustrans, Smarter Choices Safer Places and Strathclyde Partnership for Transport.

Our Digital Liaison Officer has been assigned by Digital Scotland as a Community Champion and Single Point of Contact to assist in stimulating demand for the fibre roll-out programme. Considerable work has been undertaken to progress planning applications in mobile phone infrastructure.

We have responded to consultations, attended community events and assisted with the planning and pre consultation process to ensure the process for delivering digital and mobile infrastructure is as seamless as possible. As the fibre roll-out programme goes live, support is available for local businesses in all matters that revolve around digital connectivity, broadband and mobile networks.

There have been significant improvements in Superfast Broadband Network with an additional 12 Cabinets being built and four exchange areas being complete. Work continues in the other exchange areas. This will increase the number of premises that receive broadband speeds in excess of 24Mbps.

In the same period other areas throughout Argyll and Bute have seen an additional 112 Cabinets being built.

The average time taken to resolve IT incidents within the council reduced from 5.4 hours in 2015-16 to 3.4 hours in 2016-17. THE ICT Service was the best performing of Scottish local authorities based on Society of IT Managers (Socitm) benchmarking.

The number of online transactions increased from 176,473 to 263,400 in 2016-17, which represents a saving of over £500,000.

Consultation & Engagement

We consulted with customers on the preferred opening hours of Customer Service Points and were told that an early closure would be preferred to a late opening. We have now implemented the new hours to suit our customers.

Key challenges

We continue our work with SEPA and other Local District partners to address the challenges associated with flooding events and managing flood risk. This includes preparing Surface Water Management Plans and working with plan district groups to deliver a programme of actions; and confirming the financial allocations for the first 6 year cycle of the Flood Risk Management Plan.

We are embedding changes to our waste and recycling collections, in view of longer term landfill ban, by effectively communicating changes to our residents and commercial customers and we continue to work with the community to improve and increase recycling rates. We are also supporting our employees to adapt to route changes and working arrangements. A new waste strategy, based on a 25 year waste financial model is being developed.

Education, skills and training maximise opportunities for all

For our young people

Growing Our Own is an initiative established by the council to ensure that it has a skilled workforce for the future.

Officers have delivered engagement sessions with schools and at recruitment fairs, created a new framework for Modern Apprentices and a new trainee framework for both recruitment and for existing staff.

The council created opportunities for 32 Modern Apprentices.

The Economic Growth Team is working with key stakeholders in the forestry sector to encourage the uptake of Modern Apprenticeships.



Our new Education Vision and Strategy document **“Our Children Their Future”** was launched.

Delivering our vision for our Education Service

Working with Education Scotland, we continue to take action to secure further improvements across the service.

Our Education Service has hard working staff, and pupils to be proud of, who together are achieving often award winning success. It's priority is on delivering services that work for our young people and our strategy, 'Our Children, Their Future' is a key part of this.

The service already boasts a number of key strengths and we are already taking action to progress improvement where needed. Change for the better is happening already.

A new Head Teacher Advisory Group was established to enhance communications.

A Digital Hub in Dunoon was created and opened and pupils from Dunoon Primary School designed the new Education Vision and Strategy App.

The Participation Measure for monitoring the impact of the Opportunities for All pledge, which aims to ensure all young people are supported in their path to sustainable employment, was 94.2% for Argyll and Bute compared to the Scottish figure of 90.4%.

We produced a new Education Digital Learning Strategy and Action Plan.



Sine MacVicar, Headteacher at Dunbeg Primary was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Scottish Education Awards.



Port Ellen Primary School was awarded the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) award at the Scottish Education Awards.

The Education Service has scrutinised current processes regarding Co-ordinated Support Plans and implemented improvements, as required. This is an education plan prepared by Local Authorities for certain children and young people with additional support needs. The plan outlines their additional support needs, objectives that have been set for them to achieve and the support they need to achieve these objectives.

iCycle continues to be a popular road safety activity within primary schools with 97% of schools taking part in on-road training. In 2016/17, 553 children were involved. Pedestrian training for 157 primary 3 pupils also took place.

Argyll and Bute Young Leaders

Six young people from Dunoon took part in creating a two hour training session to be delivered to Community Councillors by the young people. The session was developed in response to discussions with Community Councils on how best to involve young people in their activities.

Youth Services provided training on how democracy works looking at who represents us, who makes decisions, the structure of the Scottish Parliament and the role of MPs, MSP's, MSYP's (Member of Scottish Youth Parliament), Community Councils and Youth Forums. The group then looked at the theory of youth engagement and using the Golden Rules of Youth Participation, designed a fun and interactive session

For our communities

2,856 adults accessed face to face learning or literacies opportunities, an increase of 34% on the previous year.

1132 adults were engaged in Adult Learning activities that improve employability.

There was a 28% increase in adults reporting they have achieved their individual learning goals as a result of participation in an Adult Learning programme.

Building the capacity of Adults in Communities

In partnership with addictions services, Adult Learning has supported adults in recovery to boost their confidence and self-esteem, and develop their volunteering and employability skills. These have included Active Listening Skills, Assertiveness Training, REHIS Food Hygiene certificates, SQA ICT and Employability awards enabling participants to take an active role in setting up and running the Welcome In Recovery Café and Women's Support Group or securing employment.

Our training centre secured a contract worth up to £18,000, to deliver SVQ in business and admin for modern apprentices employed by the council.

For our employees

The council developed and implemented a training development programme for our managers, tailored to the needs of our organisation. The programme was refreshed and now has more online content, to allow managers to have flexibility to carry out their learning at a time that suits them and without having to travel. We also introduced a coaching approach to management so that our managers are effective at communicating with their team members.

The council's SVQ training centre has expanded the courses on offer and continues to receive excellent assessment and external verification.

Key challenges

To increase positive destinations for young people we provide detailed and individualised information and advice for school leavers in partnership with Skills Development Scotland. A multi-agency plan to meet the recommendations of Scotland's Young Workforce is being implemented.

We are also increasing the number of Duke of Edinburgh participants from the most deprived areas in Argyll and Bute. We have also ensured that all secondary schools have a minimum of three Developing Young Workforce partnership agreements in place to allow for school - employer collaboration in supporting knowledge and understanding of world-of-work skills.

We have reviewed the implementation of the new National Qualifications detailed in the Education Delivery Plan for Scotland which was published in June 2016. Our curriculum design reflects the new Curriculum for Excellence framework and new secondary benchmarking toolkit.

We are responding to the findings of Education Scotland's Inspection of Education Authorities report by continuing to make improvements. An action plan has been created and is being developed with our head teachers and head teachers advisory group.

Children and young people have the best possible start

Key Successes

The council is committed to being a good 'corporate parent' ensuring that looked after children have the best possible chances in life.

The majority of young peoples' first experience of the world of work is through part-time temporary employment such as a Saturday or a summer job. The Summer Internship Programme was established to give Looked After and Accommodated Children the opportunity to gain their first taste of employment with Argyll and Bute Council. This year Youth Services set out to build on the success of previous programmes, facilitating placements for seven young people.

Work has been carried out with schools to devise spending plans for Pupil Equity Funding. Funding is being allocated directly to schools by the Scottish Government and is targeted at closing the poverty-related attainment gap. This funding is to be spent at the discretion of head teachers working in partnership with each other, and their local authority.

Catering management software is being rolled out to all of our schools and allows the nutritional value of meals to be analysed.

School meals uptake remains above the Scottish average for both free and paid meals.

Consultation and Engagement

We asked pupils to assist in preparing primary school menus. We found that some dishes were more popular than others, and this has to be balanced with nutritional requirements. We have produced menus incorporating pupil, parent and teacher feedback.

The Children and Young Peoples Services' Planning included 22 children and young people's focus groups across all our area exploring what we could do to better support children and young people in each area. As a result we have implemented better training for professionals interacting with people who have physical disabilities or mental health issues, and more support for young people with mental health issues and better referral processes for further help with anxiety, depression and self-harming behaviour.

The information has been used to inform the development of the new Children and Young People's Services Plan.

Our annual parent Early Level Class consultation asked if parents would welcome the opportunity to use your funded ELC hours more flexibly.

41% of parents surveyed would welcome the opportunity to use their hours more flexibly and we increased the number of local authority settings which provide flexible use of funded Early Learning Childcare hours

The Argyll and Bute Family Pathway won a bronze award for partnership working with Argyll & Bute Citizens Advice Bureau (ABCAB) to provide money advice to Early Years families within the Cowal Area

The Kintyre Family Pathway achieved a Highly Commended in the Scottish Quality Improvement Awards under the Top Team category.

Tarbert Early Level Class achieved a Highly Commended in the Scottish Quality Improvement Awards for its project on increasing parental engagement in Early Learning and Childcare.

The Learning and Development Framework 0-5 Years has been completed and issued to all registered providers of Early Learning and Childcare and all childminders in Argyll and Bute.

The Early Years Continuing Professional Development calendar for 2016-17 has gained extremely positive feedback from practitioners both in terms of the number of courses accessed and the impact of the training on practice

The Communications Team introduced a new Education News feature on the Schools and Education section of the council website where all educational achievements are easily found.

A business case was approved to appoint an in-house first aid and personal safety trainer, representing a saving of £26,500 to the council. This training is being offered on a commercial basis through our training centre, generating income for the council and supporting local businesses and groups to access high quality and cost effective training.

Key challenges

We are continuing to close the gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people in our schools outlined in the National Improvement Framework for Education, specifically in reading, writing and numeracy.

We have introduced new national standardised assessments in P1, P4, P7 and S3 which focus on progression on literacies and numeracy. All schools allocated Pupil Equity Funding have been issued with guidance on creating action plans to meet the requirements of Scottish Government.

We are working with the Scottish Government to implement national standardised assessment. Key priorities being developed are; technical readiness, consultation with schools regarding timing and training programmes

To plan and implement the delivery of 1140 hours of early learning and child care by 2020 we have audited existing parenting provision and resources for each point on the parenting pathway from pre-birth to school leaver. As part of Argyll and Bute's Children all childcare settings share developmental milestone progress for all children entering primary education.

People live active, healthier and independent lives

Key Successes

We have improved partnership working with the NHS to develop exercise services for elderly frail people in the community.

The average time to process a benefits change in circumstance reduced from 5.60 days in 2015-16 to 4.76 days in 2016-17. The average number of days to process a new claim reduced from 20.85 days in 2015-16 to 18.43 days in 2016-17. The accuracy of benefit claims processing improved from 92.7% in 2015-16 to 97.7% in 2016-17.

The percentage of Scottish Welfare Fund crisis grants processed the same day increased from 98.2% in 2015-16 to 99.9% in 2016-17.

Case Study

A Welfare Rights client who lived alone was entitled to Disability Living Allowance higher rate mobility component. She was assisted through the reassessment process to claim Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and was awarded PIP standard rate daily living and enhanced rate mobility components. She also became entitled to a severe disability premium included in her Employment and Support Allowance.

Consultation and Engagement

Planning and Regulatory Services continue to deliver their Protecting Consumers Action Plan which includes responding to service requests from consumers across environmental health and trading standards; extending membership of their Buy With Confidence Scheme, working with the police to target “scams”; submitting Tactical Tasking reports to Trading Standards Scotland and promoting “no-cold calling to protect vulnerable clients.

Regulatory Services won bronze in the category for Achieving Better Outcomes. This award reflected the effective multiagency work undertaken by the Detect and Disrupt subgroup relating to Serious and Organised Crime. As a result of this work, intelligence led targeted enforcement has been undertaken by a range of enforcement agencies working together to target serious and organised crime across Argyll and Bute and West Dunbartonshire.

The Macmillan Cancer Information and Support Service unit was launched in Dunoon Library as part of the project roll out across Argyll and Bute. Health and wellbeing areas have been created to offer quality information for people interested in the signs of cancer and also information on treatments. Drop-in sessions provide an opportunity for a friendly chat over a cup of tea, with information and signposting to specialist support. The service links up with other partners to provide support relating to finances, counselling and complementary therapies.

A new management standard was developed to address the need for proactive health monitoring for front line council workers exposed to chemicals and other materials which can cause harm to workers' health.

Specialist health and safety training was provided to 281 council staff.

Intervention work relating to environmental health, animal health and welfare, trading standards and licensing standards continued with all high risk premises being inspected. We responded to an increasing demand for export certificates (1758) to support local businesses trading worldwide. We also worked to co-ordinate the event safety for Oban Live, Tiree Music Festival, FyneFest, and Bute Fest.

The number of civil ceremonies increased from 460 to 525 following improved marketing of this service.

Key challenges

We achieved a total of 73% of clients leaving Housing Support with a planned approach. Although below the target of 80% - 83% was achieved in the final quarter of the year and trends are being monitored and regular reviews are held with partners to ensure the target for 2017/2018 is met.

People live in safer and stronger communities

Community Empowerment and Participation

Community Empowerment helps communities to support themselves and an event was held for communities in Arrochar.

A community-led Action Planning Toolkit was developed providing a new online resource for community groups in Argyll. The toolkit has templates, fact sheets, and useful links and resources to help community groups to improve the places they live with an Action Plan.

West Kintyre Community Council has now updated their community action plan with an invitation to share it with the wider community planning partnership in their locality group. Another three in the South Kintyre area have been supported to prepare their action plan review. Training has been delivered on Islay.

Grant funding was received from the Scottish Government to deliver a pilot for Participatory Budgeting (PB) on growing and strengthening Gaelic in Argyll and Bute. Participatory Budgeting is recognised internationally as a way for local people to have a direct say in how, and where public funds can be used to address local needs. This was the first fully online PB project in Scotland. Support was received from the Democratic Society on the range of tools available. 142 people registered on the ideas website with 22 ideas generated within 1 month. 14 of these ideas then submitted a costed funding bid. Voting was open to anyone aged 16 years or over and living within Argyll and Bute and 889 people from across the council area voted. The voting audit report evidenced participation from across the council area. This included all of the small towns: Campbeltown, Dunoon, Helensburgh, Lochgilphead, Oban and Rothesay with higher numbers in the towns where there was a local project who had submitted a bid. Island participation included voters from Coll, Tiree, Colonsay, Mull, Islay, Iona, Jura, Gigha and Bute. 10 outreach events took place promoting the project and offering the chance for people to vote then and there. These were run at schools, community activities and public events. A number of other face to face promotion activities without voting tablets were also held. A total of £15,000 was distributed to 5 projects on Growing Gaelic in Argyll and Bute.

Consultation and Engagement

We launched a project to allow community-led festive lighting projects in Argyll and Bute from 2018/19 onwards. We assessed the ambitions of each community and are working on bespoke solutions. The groups involved liked the style of our face-to-face engagement and the commitment of the council to forward plan and future proof.

120 organisations received Third Sector Grant funding totalling £148,298.

Rothesay Library's "Story of the Month" project, aimed at encouraging local primary school children to read and use the library, won a Silver Award at the Staff Excellence Awards Ceremony.

This project has now been rolled out to another two libraries.

Culture and Libraries commitment to good customer care was recognised with the award of the Customer Service Excellence Standard.

Place Partnership funding of £200,000 was secured from Creative Scotland to support the aims of the Cultural Strategy. The key objectives are supporting a sustainable CHArts structure, developing a cultural brand across Argyll and Bute, improving access to cultural activities and encouraging collaborative delivery of cultural programmes.

The average response time for winter gritting was 0.82 hours, ahead of the 1.46 hour target. Through effective planning the service can rapidly mobilise to combat freezing conditions.

Young Scot Card Smart tickets for school transport were made available to pupils of Tarbert Academy, Rothesay Joint Campus, Lochgilphead Joint Campus and Campbeltown Grammar.

We worked with Transport Scotland and the local bus operator to introduce Kidz cards for Oban Primary pupils, allowing their bus tickets to be pre-loaded electronically before travel and topped up with additional journeys as and when required.

Planning and Regulatory Services continue to carry out shellfish monitoring in partnership with the Scottish Government until 31 March 2018.

The Communications Team responded to nearly 1,000 media enquiries, issued around 300 press releases and increased our use of social media as part of our work to inform people about the work and services of the council.

Even more communities are now getting their news and information about the council online. The number of people following the council on corporate social media sites increased to more than 12,000.

Officers delivered the administration of elections, by-elections and the European Referendum, including enhanced prospective candidate information activity.

Health and Safety staff supported colleagues in Roads and Amenity Services to carry out refuse route risk assessments which has reduced the need for vehicles to reverse as often.

A new Safety Impact Assessment was created by the Health and Safety team to help make sure the council has more information available to allow decisions to be made confidently in the fact that safety implications have been fully considered at the planning stage.

Over a quarter of the council's employees have been trained in equalities. Equalities training has been rolled out as mandatory training through the council's training plan.

The Civil Contingencies Team works closely with communities and multi-agency partners to reduce the likelihood and impact of civil emergencies across the Argyll and Bute area.

Consultation and Engagement

The Communications Team carried out and reported on a wide ranging consultation exercise on making the savings for the 2017-18 budget. A good response was received from communities and individuals across Argyll and Bute and informed the decisions taken by Elected Members.

The Universal Support Delivered Locally pilot won the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation Scottish Award for Excellence in partnership working. This followed a successful bid by the Welfare Reform Working Group to be one of only eleven national sites selected by the Department of Work and Pensions to help people in receipt of benefits learn how to claim online in preparation for the roll out of Universal Credit.

The Welfare Reform Working Group includes registered social landlords, The Department for Work and Pensions, Skills Development Scotland, NHS, Citizens Advice, Bute Advice, AliEnergy and others. Working closely together we made sure that households affected by the reduced benefit cap were supported; won substantial funding for a financial inclusion service through to 2020 which will help our citizens manage debt and address fuel poverty, and are now working on an Anti-Poverty strategy.

Key challenges

To deliver a library service to remote and island communities the successful programme of sending book collections led by volunteers will be expanded. Online services will be improved and include a commitment to increasing the number of e-books available for loan.

We are reviewing our Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils and elections and have a consultation and project plan in place to engage with communities, effect changes to the scheme and re-establish community councils, which includes 56 inaugural meetings over a period of 21 days.

Money Matters

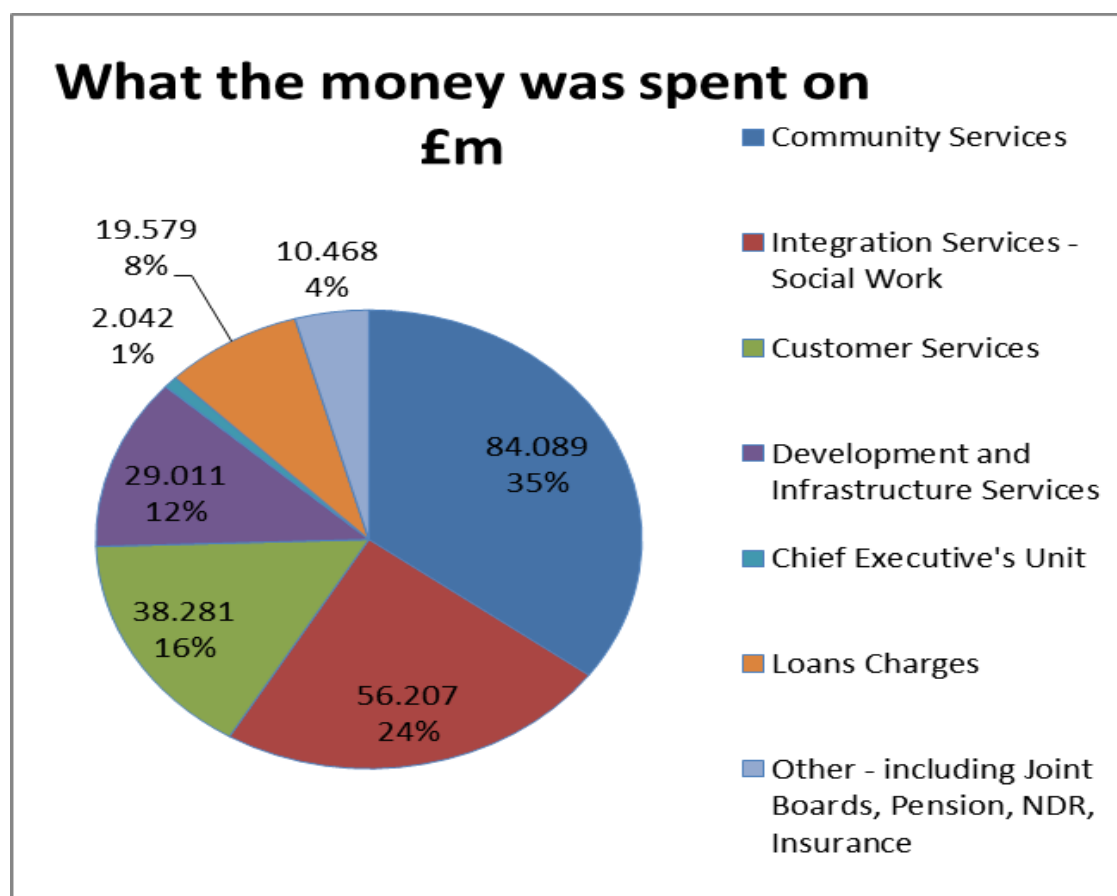
This summary provides an outline of Argyll and Bute Council's financial position during the 2016- 2017 period, highlighting the key issues over the year. It provides information on revenue and capital income and expenditure for the year, assets and liabilities, borrowing and reserves with a comment on the future outlook. The full set of audited annual accounts for 2016-17 is available on the council's website from the start of October 2017 at www.argyll-bute.gov.uk

Revenue expenditure

This relates to the day to day costs of service delivery.

This includes the cost of employing staff, operating and maintaining buildings, the cost of goods and services purchased from suppliers and the cost of financing borrowing.

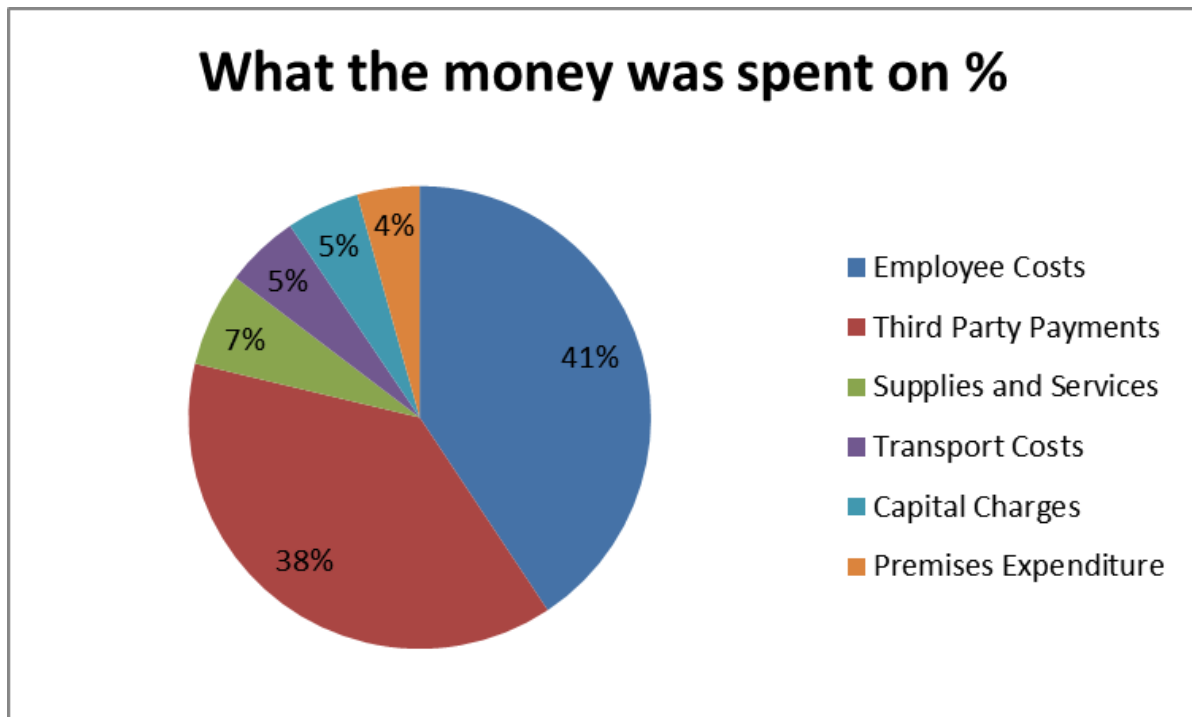
The chart below shows an extract of total net expenditure of £239.676m showing what the money was spent on.



Revenue expenditure

The chart below shows an extract of total gross expenditure showing what the money was

spent on by type.



Capital expenditure

Capital expenditure is the money spent on acquiring or enhancing fixed assets like buildings, land, roads and equipment. It is funded by income from sales of assets, government grants and contributions from reserves and the revenue budget with the balance coming from borrowing. During 2016 -17, capital expenditure was £23.751m with capital funding of £11.375m resulting in borrowing of £12.380m.

Balance sheet

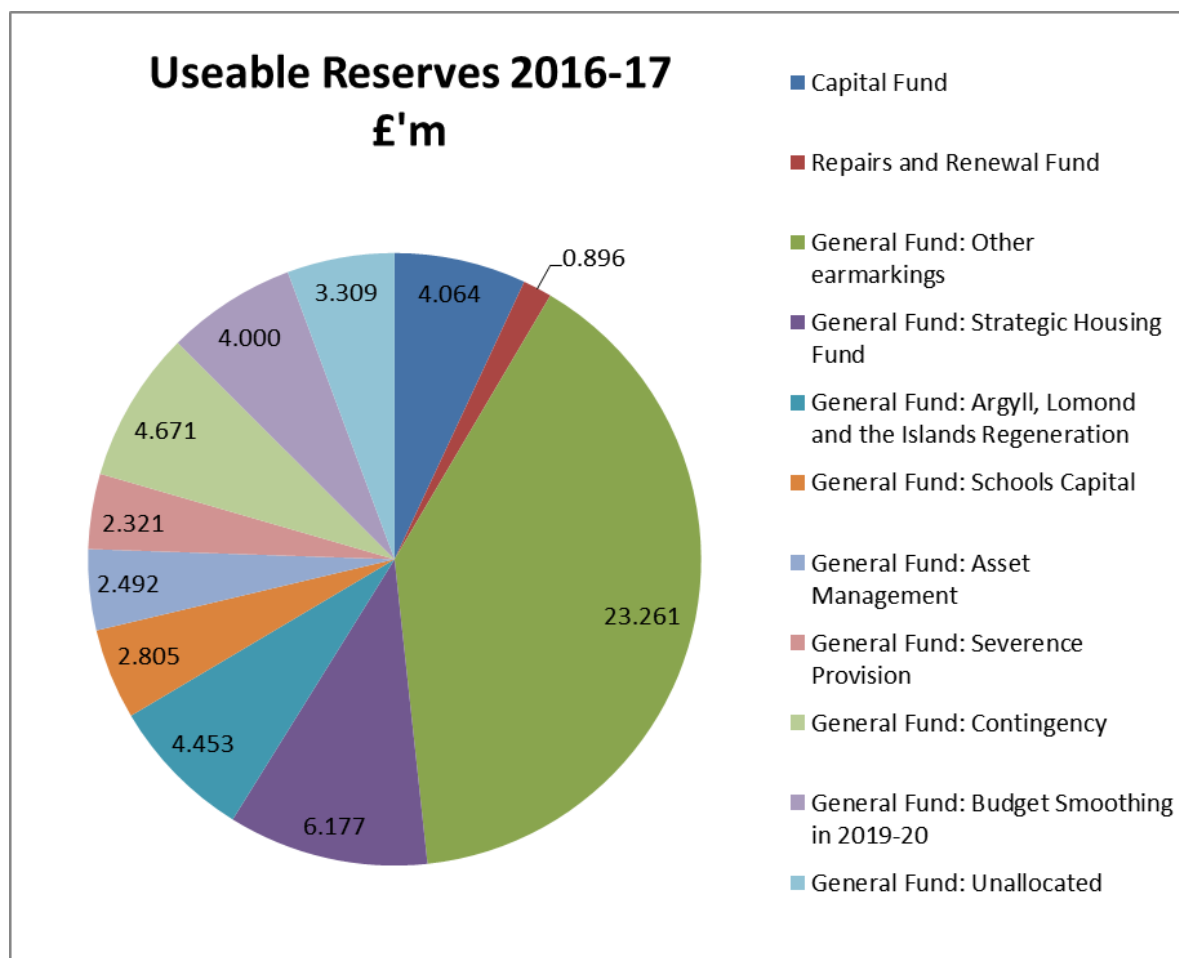
The balance sheet is a snapshot of the council's assets and liability at the end of the financial year. Long term assets include buildings, land, roads and equipment. Current assets are mainly monies owed to the council and cash held in bank accounts or on investment. Current liabilities are sums we are due to pay within the next financial year. Long term liabilities include long term borrowing, future contract payments and pension liabilities.

Net assets comprising long term and current assets less current and longer term liabilities are represented by the council's reserves. The council's net assets are £151.204m.

Reserves

Reserves are the amounts set aside for a specific purpose. Reserves can be usable or unusable. Usable reserves are those backed by actual resources and can be applied to fund expenditure or reduce local taxation. The council holds usable reserves of £58.449m. Unusable resources are required purely for accounting purposes they do not represent resources available for the council to use. The council holds a total of £151.204m in reserves.

The chart below shows useable reserves.

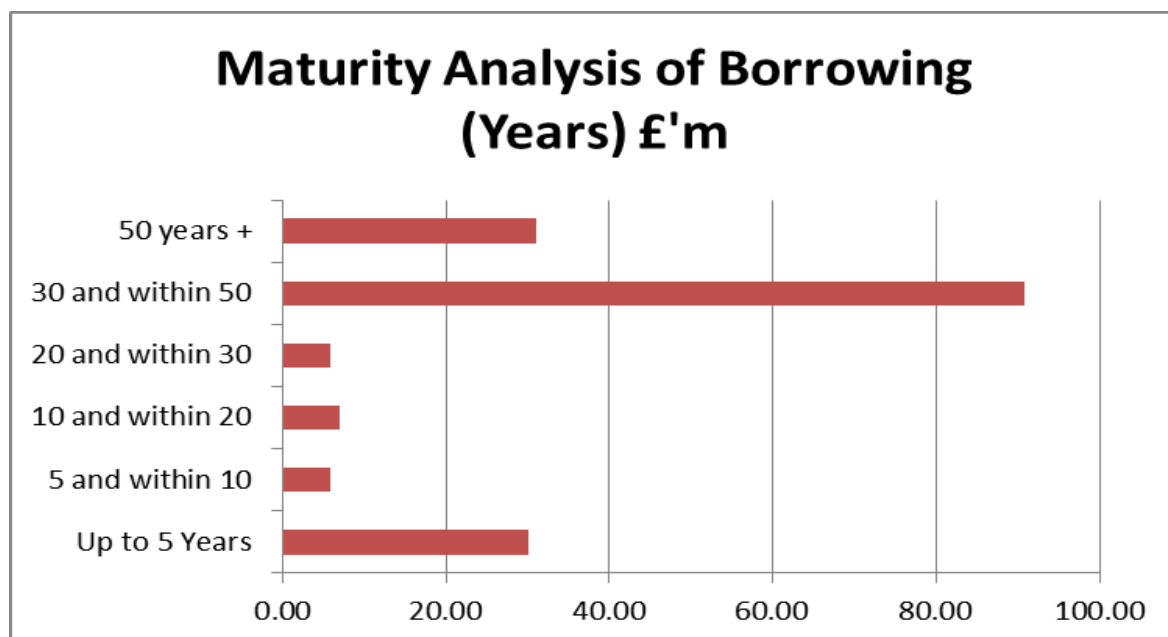


Treasury management - borrowing and investments

Treasury management is taking care of our borrowing, cash flow and investments. We have to make sure that these bring the best possible returns so that the council can continue to deliver its essential services, while at the same time managing and planning for any risks. Our investment strategy aims to optimise the rate of return. This helps us to ensure we have money available to make payments when we need to, and also to make sure that the money invested is repaid to the council in full.

To achieve this we place money with a number of different banks for periods ranging from overnight to one year, depending on the credit rating of the bank and the limits relating to that institution as set out within our investment strategy. At 31st March 2017, the total sum of money borrowed from external sources was £170.503m. Most of this was financed by the Public Works Loan Board (£116.217m) with the rest coming mainly from the money market.

The chart below shows borrowing by maturity period.



Plans for the Future

The Council agreed a number of service choices savings as part of the 2016-17 budget with some of the service choices savings being deliverable from 2017-18 or beyond. This budget created a solid foundation to work from and for the 2017-18 budget most of the savings required to balance the budget had already been agreed in February 2016. Efficiency savings for 2017-18 were also agreed in October 2016, in advance of the budget setting and this also reduced the budget gap. Despite only receiving a one year settlement from Scottish Government, the Council agreed a revenue budget for 2017-18 and two year indicative budgets for 2018-19 and 2019-20. The Council also agreed updates to the capital plan covering the period to 2019-20.

The council has recognised the need to develop a medium to longer term financial strategy which will set out a plan to demonstrate how the council will respond to the demands and pressures whilst ensuring that there is a sustainable council that meets the needs of its communities and one that can take advantage of opportunities that arise. At the budget meeting in February 2017, the Council agreed a set of principles that support the longer term sustainability of the Council and the financial strategy will be developed during 2017.

In November 2016, the Council approved the business case for the creation of a Charitable Trust to deliver leisure and library services in Argyll and Bute and it is anticipated that the Leisure Trust will be operational from October 2017. The Council is committed to driving forward change through transformation and innovation and a Transformation Board has now been established to take forward further transformational change. Their main focus is delivering change to improve service delivery and to help balance the budget in 2018-19 and beyond and they have a number of work streams that are being taken forward.

Key successes

The percentage of contracted spend increased from 88.61% in 2015-16 to 90.12% in 2016-17.

The number of contracts actively managed increased from 129 to 136 in 2016/17. Value of cashable savings increased from £2.072m to £3.073m in 2016-17.

Collections of non-domestic rates increased from 97.14% to 97.64%. The amount of non-domestic rates relief awarded increased from £9.1m to £9.3m, showing support to small businesses.

During 2016/17, a total of £657,109 of LEADER funding was awarded to 15 projects. Three were Argyll and Bute Council projects which secured £236,000.

The Corporate Support Section working with the assistance of the council's Treasury Advisors have enhanced the rate of return that the council receives from its investments.

The council's Treasury function working with the assistance of the council's Treasury Advisors enhanced the rate of return that the council receives from its investments and delayed the taking of replacement long term borrowing, by actively managing the council's cash flow position. This resulted in savings of around £0.944m in loans charges during 2016-17.

Your feedback is welcome

Argyll and Bute Council is committed to continuous improvement and we welcome your feedback.

If you have a comment or suggestion about our services we would be happy to hear from you.

Contact details

Telephone: 01546 605522

Text: 07860023933

Email: enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Post: Kilmory
Lochgilphead
Argyll and Bute
PA31 8RT

Useful links

www.argyll-bute.gov.uk



@argyllandbute



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