

BUDGET CONSULTATION – FINDINGS REPORT

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Argyll and Bute Council aims to work with, as well as for, the people of Argyll and Bute. We therefore held a consultation exercise seeking the views of our citizens on making savings, and on the council and communities working together.
- 1.2 More than 770 people responded and provided nearly 2,500 ideas and comments.
- 1.3 This report outlines the feedback they provided for elected members' consideration.

BUDGET CONSULTATION – FINDINGS REPORT

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This report summarises the feedback provided by local communities to the council's budget planning consultation, for consideration by elected members.

3.0 DETAIL

Consultation approach

- 3.1 The council carries out budget consultation exercises to ensure that communities have the opportunity to get involved in the process of setting the council budget.
- 3.2 This year's consultation asked people to give their views on savings options, on the council and communities working together, and on what they value about Argyll and Bute.
- 3.3 It was promoted in a variety of ways, from social media and website links, to email, in council customer service points and via the on-line network of the Third Sector Interface.
- 3.4 People could give views on the council's website, in printed copies available in libraries and council offices, through our Youth Services, and via our Citizens Panel (a representative section of the local population).
- 3.5 We received responses from across Argyll and Bute and from residents aged 16 – 75+
- 3.6 People were free to respond to all or only parts of the consultation. Respondents went to considerable effort to give feedback: as well as responses to the questions set, we received nearly 2,500 comments and suggestions, from individuals, businesses and groups.
- 3.7 A summary of findings is presented below. Overall findings from the Citizens Panel and general population responses were the same, so are presented as one set of findings.

Key Findings – Service Priorities

- 3.8 Respondents were asked to choose their top three priorities from a number of service areas ranging from public transport and roads to education for adults/children, regulatory, environmental and customer services. The top three are:
- Education services for children
 - Care for vulnerable people
 - Roads
- 3.9 Respondents were asked if they were 'for', 'against' or had 'no view' of 32 different savings options, which were set out with details of the savings possible and impact on jobs. Responses are listed in Appendix 1.
- 3.10 People are either in favour of, or have no view, of almost all savings options presented. Responses 'for'/'no view' are split equally with those 'against' for the closure of public toilet facilities.
- 3.11 Objections were made to individual savings options by letter, email or as comments in the consultation.
- 3.12 Closure of public toilets, closure of the road safety unit, reduction in education management posts, reduction in community grants, and increasing charges for the Isla/Jura ferry service all received detailed objections.
- 3.13 Questions 4 and 6 asked for other suggestions for making savings, cutting costs and raising income. Similar feedback was given to both these questions so is outlined together, in Appendix 2. The main themes put forward are:
- Review and cut staff/councillor/running costs eg reduce travel, salaries, bureaucracy, expenditure on consultants (38%)
 - Review working practices eg reduce sickness absence, staff turnover (12%)
 - Reduce spend on or charge for non-essentials eg leaflets, non-essential services (10%)
 - Better use of IT (9%)
 - Sell, rent or make better use of buildings and/or facilities (7%)
 - Review or close small schools (7%)
- 3.14 Respondents were then asked what services/advice/training other organisations or groups might buy from the council: 21% said none or didn't know; 79% identified skills within the council that could be of commercial value. These are listed in Appendix 2. The top three are:

- Support services: Admin, secretarial, marketing, public relations, payroll, recruitment, HR, customer service (14%)
- Training / education (11%)
- IT / Internet (Help desk, services, skills training) (11%)

Key findings – getting involved with us in helping your community

- 3.15 Question 7 asked what people would like to get back if they got involved with the council in helping their community.
- 3.16 29% said they would not be interested or did not reply. The majority attributed this to not having time, to already being involved in volunteering, or having age/health issues.
- 3.17 For those interested, these are the most popular reasons:
- Make a difference to life in my community (39%)
 - Work experience (23%)
 - Training (21%)
- 3.18 The overall preference for how often to volunteer was during the day (rather than evenings or weekends) on a monthly/weekly basis.
- 3.19 Preferences for the areas of work in which people would like to be involved were very closely split across those listed in Appendix 3 – to follow. The top three are:
- Community engagement/development, community council (8%)
 - Environmental or conservation (7%)
 - Looking after or helping vulnerable people) (7%)

Key findings – promoting the area to attract people and jobs

- 3.20 Question 11 asked what makes people most proud of Argyll and Bute. Answers are set out in Appendix 3 with these as the top three choices:
- Scenery (71%)
 - Lifestyle (45%)
 - The people who live here (44%)
- 3.21 Respondents were then asked how they could help promote Argyll and Bute as a great place to live, learn, work and do business:
- Social media (57%)
 - Word of mouth (48%)
 - Inspire others (eg tourists/customers) to promote a positive experience of the area (40%)
 - Other (4%) – social media, promotional films, better internet access

3.22 Following on from this question, respondents were asked if there is anything the council could do to help them promote the area. The majority said 'no' or did not respond. Suggestions put forward by those who said 'yes' focused on actions for the council, primarily:

- Improve facilities/infrastructure: roads, transport links, broadband/internet access (64%)
- Advertising/increased marketing of the area/use social media (32%)
- Provide employment opportunities or support businesses (9%)
- Work with local communities, partners and community groups (9%)

Providing feedback for respondents

3.23 In recognition of the time people have spent giving their views, and in response to requests received through previous consultations, feedback will be provided on how views given have contributed to decisions made.

3.24 This will be made available in different ways, as soon as possible after the budget-setting meeting of 22 February.

3.25 Information will be:

- published on our website and on social media
- emailed to community councils, our community planning partners, and via the council's weekly news round up.

4.0 CONCLUSION

4.1 Many people gave time and thought to this year's consultation. This report and its appendices set out the findings from this consultation for consideration by elected members.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1/2 Policy/Financial: Feedback from the consultation is set out in this report for elected members to consider in progressing planning our future.

5.3 Legal : None

5.4 HR : None

5.5 Equalities :The consultation was 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 get involved in setting the council's budget.

Executive Director Douglas Hendry

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Attachments

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| Appendix 1: | Views on savings options |
| Appendix 2: | Suggestions for making savings, cutting costs or raising income /
Services or training others might buy from the council |
| Appendix 3: | Areas of interest for public involvement /
Reasons to be proud of Argyll and Bute |

Appendix 1: Views on savings options

Please find below the views given on possible savings options. The most favoured response is highlighted in blue.

Savings Option	% For	% No view	% Against
TB01-1: Development and Infrastructure (roads and amenity, planning, economic development) – review support delivered by central council services.	32	38	30
TB03-1: Environmental Health and Animal Health – increase income through raising fees to better match what is charged by other councils	50	39	11
TB03-3: Environmental Health and Animal Health – redesign arrangements for service delivery	44	47	9
TB04-2: Regulatory Services – stop doing work that is not a duty of a council	52	39	9
TB04-4: Regulatory Services – remodel advice, debt counselling and welfare rights services	46	33	21
TB06-1: Planning/Other Planning Services – introduce charges for non-statutory pre-application services for all scales of development	49	40	11
TB06-2: Planning/Other Planning Services – stop displaying planning applications in Post Offices	58	25	17
TB06-4: Planning/Other Planning Services – reduce team leadership	48	38	14
TB06-5: Planning/Other Planning Services – reduce team whose duties include processing householder/major/local planning applications	37	39	24
TB06-9: Planning/Other Planning Services – increase charges by 3%	54	34	12
TB07: Depots – create one main depot in key areas, to reduce running costs and create opportunities to raise income	66	24	10
TB08: Parking – increase parking charges, and introduce additional parking charges to places currently not charging, to keep traffic moving, manage demand for parking, and contribute to maintenance of roads infrastructure.	44	20	36
TB09: Public Conveniences – review public toilet facilities (providing toilets is not a duty of a council)	22	28	50
TB10: Ferries – review the Isla/Jura ferry service including the cost of bookable services, increase ferry charges to better reflect actual cost, council staff to manage ships instead of an external company.	37	40	23
TB11: Piers and Harbours – increase income to fully fund capital work and loan charges	47	44	9
TB12a: Amenity Services – establish a funeral director service	39	39	22
TB12b: Amenity Services – review charges for use of Mossfield, Rothesay and Dunoon stadiums to cover the cost of using the venues and make improvement work possible. Provide a portaloos-hire service.	54	37	9

Savings option	% For	% No View	% Against
TB12c: Amenity Services – combine Roads and Amenity teams into one team and review the services provided. This saving is the Amenity Service contribution to that (with TB13c)	44	34	22
TB13b: Roads and Infrastructure – introduce or increase charges for non-statutory services; carry out work for other organisations	50	34	16
TB13c: Roads and Infrastructure – combine Roads and Amenity Teams into one team and review the services provided. This saving is the Roads Service contribution to that (with TB12c)	32	32	36
TB14: Waste – identify opportunities to raise commercial income and reduce costs of collecting and disposing of waste.	59	32	9
TB15: Airports – review existing air service contracts and the levels of operation. Pursue more commercial opportunities at Oban airport.	50	40	10
TB16-3: Economic Development - Strategic Transportation – reduce road safety materials budget and remove the Road Safety Unit.	37	29	34
TB16-10: Economic Development - Economic Growth – re-design the economic development service	47	44	9
TB16-12: Economic Development - Economic Growth – stop funding Visit Scotland with its move away from providing face-to-face advice to providing information on-line.	48	35	17
TB16-14: Economic Development - projects and regeneration – remove renewable energy budget	36	37	27
TB16-19: Economic Development - Economic Growth – stop membership of a specialist Europe-focused organisation following the UK decision to leave the European Union.	44	45	11
TB17: Property Services – identify opportunities for office rationalisation and raising income.	63	31	6
TB19: Transport – reduce costs of the council’s use and management of vehicles across different services.	45	31	24
TB20-1: Education (Centrally deployed officers) – reduce overall number of centrally deployed officers within the Education Management and Central Team.	46	37	17
TB21-1: Design and Project Management Teams – cross-departmental review and restructure of design and project management teams.	54	41	5
TB23: Education – other –review of current janitor provision within all Argyll and Bute schools.	25	35	40

Appendix 2: What other suggestions do you have for making savings, cutting costs or raising income?

- Review and cut staff/councillor/running costs eg reduce travel, salaries, bureaucracy, expenditure on consultants (38%)
- Review staffing and/or working practices eg reduce sickness absence, staff turnover (12%)
- Reduce spend on or charge for non-essentials eg leaflets, non-essential services (10%)
- Better use of IT, especially on-line meetings (9%)
- Sell, rent or make better use of buildings and/or facilities (7%)
- Review or close small schools (7%)
- Rationalise or centralise departments or staff (6%)
- Share services eg make more use of local businesses, groups or other public sector agencies to deliver services (5%)
- Reduce waste eg cut down on paper (5%)
- Reduce spend on contractors and/or consultants and bring more in-house (5%)

Which services or training might others buy from the council?

- Back office services (Marketing / PR / Admin / Secretarial / Payroll / Recruitment / HR / Customer service) (14%)
- Training / education (general) (11%)
- IT / Internet (Help desk / Services / Skills training) (11%)
- Catering Services / Food Safety (10%)
- Health and Safety / Fire Prevention / Road Safety / First Aid (8%)
- Hire out equipment/building space/parks/ school car parks etc (7%)
- Planning advice / services (7%)
- Renewables / Environmental / Recycling / Waste Management / Bin cleaning (7%)
- Professional Services (Accounting / Legal / Surveying / Architecture) (7%)
- Grounds / Garden maintenance (6%)
- Council should concentrate on delivering own services (6%)
- Hire out fleet cars / vans (use as taxis / delivery / collection) / Other Transport provision / MOT testing (6%)

Appendix 3: In which areas of our work would you be interested in getting involved?

- Community engagement, community council or community development (8%)
- Environmental or conservation (7%)
- Looking after or helping vulnerable people (7%)
- Anything (7%)
- Education (adult or unspecified) (6%)
- Business, industry or commerce (6%)
- Gardening (5%)
- Already involved in some way (5%)
- Working with or helping elderly people (5%)
- Education for children / young people (5%)

What makes you most proud of Argyll and Bute?

- Scenery (71%)
- Lifestyle (45%)
- The people who live here (44%)
- Community spirit (42%)
- Community safety (30%)
- Economic strengths eg food and drink, tourism (25%)
- Other (3%)

'Other' includes culture, heritage, wildlife and clean air.

