

**BUDGET SURVEY – FINDINGS**

---

**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Argyll and Bute Council aims to work with, as well as for, the people of Argyll and Bute.
- 1.2 With budget gaps forecast to continue for Argyll and Bute Council services, we ran a high level survey seeking views of our citizens on priorities for the council.
- 1.3 This report outlines what our 871 respondents told us.

## BUDGET SURVEY – FINDINGS

---

### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This report outlines public feedback to the council's high level budget survey.
- 2.2 We received replies from 871 respondents and nearly 2,000 comments.

### 3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that elected members consider the findings of this report in budget planning.

### 4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 The council has run budget consultations of various kinds in recent years, and welcomed feedback from our communities on different aspects of the council's work.
- 4.2 This year we ran a high level survey from January to February, asking people to tell us about their priorities for the services of Argyll and Bute Council.
- 4.3 It was promoted in a variety of ways, including through email subscriptions, social media and the council's website which includes a tool for translating information into different languages and providing support for readers with visual impairment.

#### Findings

- 4.4 We asked people which three council services they use the most:
- Bins/waste, roads, and public transport services
- 4.5 We asked people which three council services they believe are most important for the area:
- Roads, bins/waste, and education/early years
- 4.6 We asked for views on paying more for local services when council budget does not meet demands:

- It depends (36%)
  - Yes (33%)
  - No (30%)
  - Don't know (1%)
- 4.7 Where people indicated a level of support for paying more, comments on this indicated support on the basis that costs are affordable and fair, and take into account those in lower income households. We also received suggestions for raising income. These, and comments saying 'no' to paying more, fell into the same themes as responses received to question 5 and so are reported at 4.11.
- 4.8 Where the council budget does not meet demands, we also asked for views on stopping council services that are not a duty of a council. Overall respondents told us that:
- It depends (40%)
  - No (33%)
  - Yes (24%)
  - Don't know (3%)
- 4.9 In comments provided in response to this question overall respondents said that:
- They would need more information about which services are duties of a council and which are not; on the impact that stopping a service would have; and that more consultation with communities would be needed about stopping specific services.
  - Many services are essential even if they are not a duty, with public toilets standing out for mention; and that what is essential for one person or one area might be different for others.
  - They questioned who would deliver services if the council did not.
- 4.10 We invited suggestions for protecting council services from budget cuts. Feedback to this question fell into three key themes:
- Increase efficiency and productivity in the council
  - Raise income
  - Work with others for the area
- 4.11 Details of the suggestions behind these themes are listed in Appendix 1.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Many people gave time and thought to this high level survey. This report and Appendix 1 set out findings for consideration by elected members.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Policy: None directly arising from this report
- 6.2 Financial: None directly arising from this report
- 6.3 Legal: None directly arising from this report
- 6.4 HR: None directly arising from this report
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty: None directly arising from this report
- 6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics
- 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty
- 6.5.3 Islands
- 6.6 Climate Change: None directly arising from this report
- 6.7 Risk: None directly arising from this report
- 6.8 Customer Service: Providing information on how the findings of this report are used in the decision-making of the council will highlight the value of citizens taking the time to get involved in the council's budget planning process.
- 6.9 The Rights of the Child (UNCRC): None arising directly from this report.

**Kirsty Flanagan**

**Executive Director with responsibility for Customer Support Services**

**18 February 2025**

**For further information contact:**

Jane Fowler, Head of Customer Support Services, [jane.fowler@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:jane.fowler@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

Jane Jarvie, Communications Manager, [jane.jarvie@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:jane.jarvie@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

## **Appendix 1 – Suggestions for protecting council services from future budget gaps**

The suggestions we received were based on these three main themes.

### **Efficiency and productivity**

- Ensure robust financial project management of all council projects
- Review expenditure of all council services for essential-only spend
- Reduce staff and councillor costs for example through use of technology and on-line meetings only; focus spend on essential services and jobs; reduce spend on consultants.
- Could council processes be improved to make getting things done more efficient?
- Could you use AI (artificial intelligence) to get things done more efficiently?
- Could you use data to be more efficient in delivering services?

### **Raising income for council services**

- Lobby for more government funding and provide a way for residents to support this; highlight the impact our geography has on costs.
- Be commercial eg charge for services you don't have to deliver; make the most of your assets
- Ensure best use of council buildings and land - sell unused schools and buildings
- Council tax – views mixed with some in favour of an increase, others against and some voicing concern for lower income households.
- Visitor levy – some voicing support for this; a smaller number voicing concern about negative impact on businesses.
- Is sponsorship from big companies an option?

### **Working with others**

- Share services with other organisations to make savings
- Don't deliver services that are the role of other organisations
- Find out from communities if, with some support, there are things they would be interested in doing if the council cannot.
- Could you work more with the private sector to get things done for the area?
- Provide more information on what services cost to deliver to enable people to give suggestions on savings.
- Encourage the public to recycle more.
- Work with other councils eg could there be a collective public sector energy deal that would make savings?