

MINUTES of SPECIAL MEETING of ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL held ON A HYBRID BASIS IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, KILMORY, LOCHGILPHEAD AND BY MICROSOFT TEAMS on THURSDAY, 29 JANUARY 2026

Present:

Councillor Jan Brown (Chair)

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

Attending:

Pippa Milne, Chief Executive
Douglas Hendry, Executive Director
Kirsty Flanagan, Executive Director
David Logan, Head of Legal and Regulatory Support
Anne Blue, Head of Financial Services
Carolyn Earl, Head of Financial Services (Consultant)
Ross McLaughlin, Head of Commercial Services
Fergus Murray, Head of Development and Economic Growth
Andrew Summers, Head of Roads and Infrastructure Services
Shona Barton, Governance Manager
Fergus Walker, Revenues and Benefits Manager

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Audrey Forrest, Daniel Hampsey, Willie Hume, Gary Mulvaney and Dougie Philand.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest intimated.

**3. AUDITED ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025
- ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL**

The Council gave consideration to a report providing an update on the external audit of the Annual Accounts for the Council for the year ended 31 March 2025, following scrutiny of the draft Annual Accounts and Annual Audit Report by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 27 January 2026.

Decision

The Council –

1. noted that the audit was substantially complete and that Forvis Mazars had advised that they were expecting to issue an unqualified opinion on the Council's Annual Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025;
2. noted Forvis Mazars Annual Audit Report (included as agenda item 3 (c));
3. approved for signature the Letter of Representation (included as agenda item 3 (d)); and
4. authorised for issue, the Council's draft Audited Annual Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025 (included as agenda item 3 (e)), subject to any final presentation adjustments agreed by the Section 95 Officer, and on the basis that no material changes were anticipated to arise from the follow-up letter from Forvis Mazars, otherwise the Audited Annual Accounts would be referred back to Members for approval.

(Reference: Report by Section 95 Officer dated 28 January 2026, recommendation from the Special meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee held on 27 January 2026, Annual Audit Report for the year ended 31 March 2025, 2024/25 Argyll and Bute Council ISA 580 Letter of Representation and Argyll and Bute Council Audited Annual Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025, submitted)

Councillors Yvonne McNeilly and Tommy MacPherson joined the meeting during the consideration of the following item of Business.

4. AUDITED ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025 - TRUST FUNDS

The Council gave consideration to a report providing an update on the external audit of the Council's Trust Funds Annual Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025 following scrutiny of the Annual Accounts and Annual Audit Report by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 27 January 2026.

Decision

The Council –

1. noted that external audit expected to issue an unqualified audit certificate for the Council's Trust Funds Annual Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025;
2. authorised for issue, the Trust Funds Audited Annual Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025, included within item 4 (c) of the Agenda;
3. noted Forvis Mazars' Annual Audit Report, included within item 4 (c) of the Agenda; and
4. approved for signature, the ISA 580 Letter of Representation, included within item 4 (c) of the Agenda.

(Reference: Report by Section 95 Officer dated 28 January 2026, recommendation from the Special meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee held on 27 January 2026, and Audited Annual Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025– Trust Funds, submitted)

5. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY - MID YEAR REVIEW REPORT 2025/26

The Council gave consideration to a recommendation from the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee held on 16 December 2025 in relation to the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy Mid-year Review for 2025-26.

Decision

The Council agreed the recommendation from the Audit and Scrutiny Committee –

1. that the report and the treasury activity undertaken over the period 1 April to 30 September 2025 be noted; and
2. that the revised 2025-26 Prudential Indicators as set out in paragraph 5.2.3 of the report are approved.

(Reference: Recommendation from the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee held on 16 December 2025 and report by Section 95 Officer, dated 21 November 2025, submitted)

6. THE FUTURE OF COUNCIL TAX IN SCOTLAND - CONSULTATION RESPONSE

The Council gave consideration to a report setting out key issues arising from a consultation seeking views on potential reforms to the Council Tax system. The report presented a draft response to the consultation informed by national context and the specific circumstances for Argyll and Bute.

Decision

The Council –

1. noted the key issues highlighted in the submitted report, including:
 - the need for transitional protection that is sensitive to rural and island impacts;
 - potential enhancements to the CTR scheme;
 - concerns about the limitations of national modelling;
 - the importance of nationally-set banding structures and equalisation arrangements;
2. reviewed the draft consultation response attached at Appendix 1 to the submitted report and provided any amendments or political input they wished officers to consider; and
3. agreed that officers proceed to finalise and submit the Council's response to the Scottish Government by the consultation closing date of 30 January 2026 incorporating Member input.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Financial Services dated 7 January 2026, submitted)

7. REVIEW OF THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE INTEGRATION SCHEME 2025 - CONSULTATION OUTCOME REPORT

The Council gave consideration to a report providing an overview of the feedback received to an 8 week joint consultation exercise in relation to a review of the Health and Social Care Integration Scheme. The report set out proposed changes to the Scheme arising from the consultation process.

Decision

The Council –

1. noted the detail of the 36 responses received during the 8 week consultation period, set out in appendix 1 to the submitted report;
2. agreed the revised Integration Scheme at Appendix 2 to the submitted report, which had been further updated to take account of feedback received as part of the consultation process;
3. noted that the report was also tabled at the NHS Highland Board on 27 January 2026 for approval; and
4. agreed that the Chief Executives of the two partner bodies jointly submit the revised Scheme to the Scottish Government for their consideration and approval, at the appropriate time.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support dated 19 January 2026, submitted)

8. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION RESPONSE - DRAFT NATIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE PLAN 2026-2040

The Council gave consideration to a report seeking approval of Argyll and Bute Council's official response to the Scottish Government Draft Climate Change Plan 2026-2040.

Decision

The Council approved the consultation response attached at Appendix 1 to the submitted report for submission to the Scottish Government by 29 January 2026.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Commercial Services dated January 2026, submitted)

9. ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL VISITOR LEVY UPDATE REPORT

The Council gave consideration to a report providing an update on the proposed introduction of a visitor levy for Argyll and Bute.

Motion

That Members;

1. Continue to pause deciding on the implementation of the Visitor Levy given the ongoing introduction of the Visitor Levy (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill and accompanying documents to the Scottish Parliament.
2. Agree the recommendations from the Shadow Visitor Levy Forum (SLVF) that the following business representatives be added to the SVLF
 - Fiona MacConnacher - Booking.com
 - Zoe Davidson - McKinlay Kidd
 - Beth Rehman - Perle hotels
 - Jo Prior - Cill-Mhoire Lodges
3. Agree that further reports are submitted to the Council in (a) April 2026 to update members on the work being taken forward in consultation with the SVLF on possible options for the implementation of a Visitor Levy in Argyll and Bute and (b) to a future meeting when said work on possible options has concluded to enable the council to make a fully informed decision on the implementation of a Visitor Levy.

Moved by Councillor Jim Lynch, seconded by Councillor Ross Moreland.

Amendment

It is recommended that the Council:

- a) Continue to pause deciding on the implementation of the Visitor Levy given the ongoing introduction of the Visitor Levy (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill and accompanying documents to the Scottish Parliament, and agree that no Visitor Levy scheme will be brought forward for decision unless and until the Visitor Levy (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill has completed its parliamentary passage, statutory guidance is finalised, and a further full public consultation demonstrates clear support for implementation in Argyll and Bute.
- b) Agree the recommendations from the Scottish Visitor Levy Forum (SLVF) that an additional four business representatives be added to the SVLF to include -
 - Fiona MacConnacher
 - Zoe Davidson
 - Beth Rehman
 - Jo Prior
- c) Agree that a further report is submitted to the Council in April 2026 to update members on the work being taken forward in consultation with the SVLF on possible options for the implementation of a Visitor Levy in Argyll and Bute, and to note progress on the legislative timetable, statutory guidance, and any further consultation required before any future decision can be considered.
- d) Note that the council's consultation found that 57% of respondents did not support the introduction of a Visitor Levy across Argyll and Bute.

Moved by Councillor Amanda Hampsey, seconded by Councillor Julie McKenzie.

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

Motion

Councillor John Armour
Councillor Gordon Blair
Councillor Jan Brown
Councillor Math Campbell Sturgess
Councillor Kieron Green
Councillor Graham Hardie
Councillor Anne Horn
Councillor Fiona Howard
Councillor Mark Irvine
Councillor Andrew Kain
Councillor Paul Donald Kennedy
Councillor Reeni Kennedy Boyle
Councillor Jim Lynch
Councillor Luna Martin
Councillor Ian James MacQuire
Councillor Dougie McFadzean
Councillor Ross Moreland
Councillor Iain Shonny Paterson
Councillor William Sinclair

Amendment

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

Decision

The Motion was carried by 19 votes to 12 and the Council resolved accordingly.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated 15 January 2026, submitted; Motion by Councillor Jim Lynch, seconded by Councillor Ross Moreland, tabled; and Amendment by Councillor Amanda Hampsey, seconded by Councillor Julie McKenzie, tabled)

10. A816 MILLBRAE LANDSLIP

The Council gave consideration to a report informing Members of the use of emergency powers in relation to a major landslip below the A816 at Carnasserie, and advising that a proposal on how the remedial works would be funded would be brought forward as part of the budget proposals in February 2026.

Decision

The Council –

1. noted the Options Report attached as Appendix 1 to the submitted report; and
2. agreed that a proposal on how the remedial works would be funded would be brought forward as part of the budget proposals in February 2026.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Roads and Infrastructure dated December 2025, submitted)

During the consideration of the following item of Business, the Council adjourned for 15 minutes between 11.40am and 11.55am, as the building was evacuated due to a fire alarm.

11. NOTICE OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 13

The following Notice of Motion under Standing Order 13 was before the Council for consideration –

The Council resolves and agrees as follows:

1. It is noted and acknowledged that there are ongoing discussions between Council Officers and Transport Scotland in relation to potential sources of funding for the Council's Harbour Investment Programme/Marine Asset Management Plan;
2. It is agreed that it would be beneficial for Members to lobby the Scottish Ministers for financial assistance for the Council's Harbour Investment Programme/Marine Asset Management Plan. The Council Leader is accordingly instructed to write a letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport to request that the Cabinet Secretary for Transport meets with the Council Leader and Harbour Board Members to discuss the complete range of financial assistance which the Scottish Ministers may be able to provide for the Council's Harbour Investment Programme/Marine Asset Management Plan, including for the avoidance of doubt, the possibilities of transferring ownership of marine assets and facilities owned by the Council to other public bodies or publicly owned bodies; declaring that the said letter shall be sent to the Scottish Ministers no later than 6 February 2026;
3. For the purposes of enabling sufficient time to allow discussions with the Scottish Ministers and Transport Scotland to progress, the Council further agrees to defer making any decisions to award any construction contracts for the Harbour Investment Programme/Marine Asset Management Plan projects at Craignure, Fionnphort, Gigha, and Tayinloan, until 2 November 2026; declaring that from 2 November 2026 onwards, approvals for any such construction contracts may be presented for approval to any subsequent Council meetings and/or Council committees as may be required;
4. That progress reports on the discussions with the Scottish Ministers and Transport Scotland about financial assistance for the Harbour Investment Programme/Marine Asset Management Plan are provided to all subsequent Harbour Board meetings (including, for the avoidance of doubt, any additional meetings of the Harbour Board which are convened in addition to the annual programme of Harbour Board meetings), commencing with the Harbour Board meeting which is scheduled to take place on 19 March 2026.

Moved by Councillor Andrew Vennard, seconded by Councillor Maurice Corry.

Amendment

The Council:

1. Note and acknowledge that senior councillors and relevant officers are in ongoing and continuing discussions regarding funding in regards to the Harbour Plan and investment in the Marine Asset Management Plan, and that these conversations will continue through the relevant channels;
2. Note that pausing decisions made by the Harbour Board for most of 2026 could risk significant delay to improving our vital services; and

3. Note that the Harbour Board receives detailed financial information as part of its programme of meetings.

Moved by Councillor Ross Moreland, seconded by Councillor Jim Lynch.

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

Motion

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

Amendment

Councillor John Armour
Councillor Gordon Blair
Councillor Jan Brown
Councillor Math Campbell Sturgess
Councillor Kieron Green
Councillor Graham Hardie
Councillor Anne Horn
Councillor Fiona Howard
Councillor Mark Irvine
Councillor Andrew Kain
Councillor Paul Donald Kennedy
Councillor Reeni Kennedy Boyle
Councillor Jim Lynch
Councillor Luna Martin
Councillor Tommy MacPherson
Councillor Ian James MacQuire
Councillor Dougie McFadzean
Councillor Ross Moreland
Councillor Iain Shonny Paterson
Councillor William Sinclair

Decision

The Amendment was carried by 20 votes to 11 and the Council resolved accordingly.

(Reference: Notice of Motion Under Standing Order 13 by Councillor Andrew Vennard, seconded by Councillor Maurice Corry, submitted; and Amendment by Councillor Ross Moreland, seconded by Councillor Jim Lynch, tabled)