

Corporate Plan

2025 - 2027



Contents

- 1. WELCOME 3
- 2. OUR PROFILE..... 4
- 3. OUR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 5
- 4. OUR VISION 6
- 5. OUR PRIORITIES 7
 - PRIORITY: COMMUNITIES 9
 - PRIORITY: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE 10
 - PRIORITY: HOUSING, ECONOMIC GROWTH AND POPULATION 11
 - PRIORITY: TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY 14
 - PRIORITY: ENVIRONMENT 16
 - PRIORITY: SUSTAINABLE SERVICE DELIVERY..... 16
 - PRIORITY: SPEAKING UP FOR ARGYLL AND BUTE..... 18
- 6. OUR CHALLENGES AND RISKS..... 19
- 7. OUR SUCCESS MEASURES 21

1. Welcome

We are delighted to introduce our Corporate Plan, which outlines our vision and strategic direction for the coming years. The landscape in which we deliver our services is constantly evolving and we will adapt and innovate to meet the needs of our communities and ensure the prosperity of our area. The considerable challenges we identified in our previous corporate plan remain unchanged; declining funding, economic dependence on the public sector, and an ageing population are ever present however we remain steadfast in our mission.

Our Corporate Plan focuses on key priorities for the next three years, with detailed actions and progress measures outlined in our Annual Business Plan. As we embark on this transformative journey, it is crucial that we remain adaptable and responsive to the evolving needs and challenges of our time. Our corporate plan serves as a compass, guiding our decision-making processes and ensuring that our efforts are aligned with our strategic objectives, with our communities at its heart.

This plan details our commitment to attracting and retaining talented individuals, fostering a positive employee experience, and cultivating a culture of unity and innovation within our council. Our aim is to build a thriving, inclusive, and forward-thinking environment that benefits everyone. Our success is built on collaboration and community engagement, forging strong partnerships and actively involving local communities is key to our success. We value the diverse perspectives and expertise within our community, and through meaningful dialogue and cooperation, we can build a brighter future together.

We are committed to delivering high-quality services, enhancing infrastructure, and nurturing a vibrant economy that creates opportunities for all.

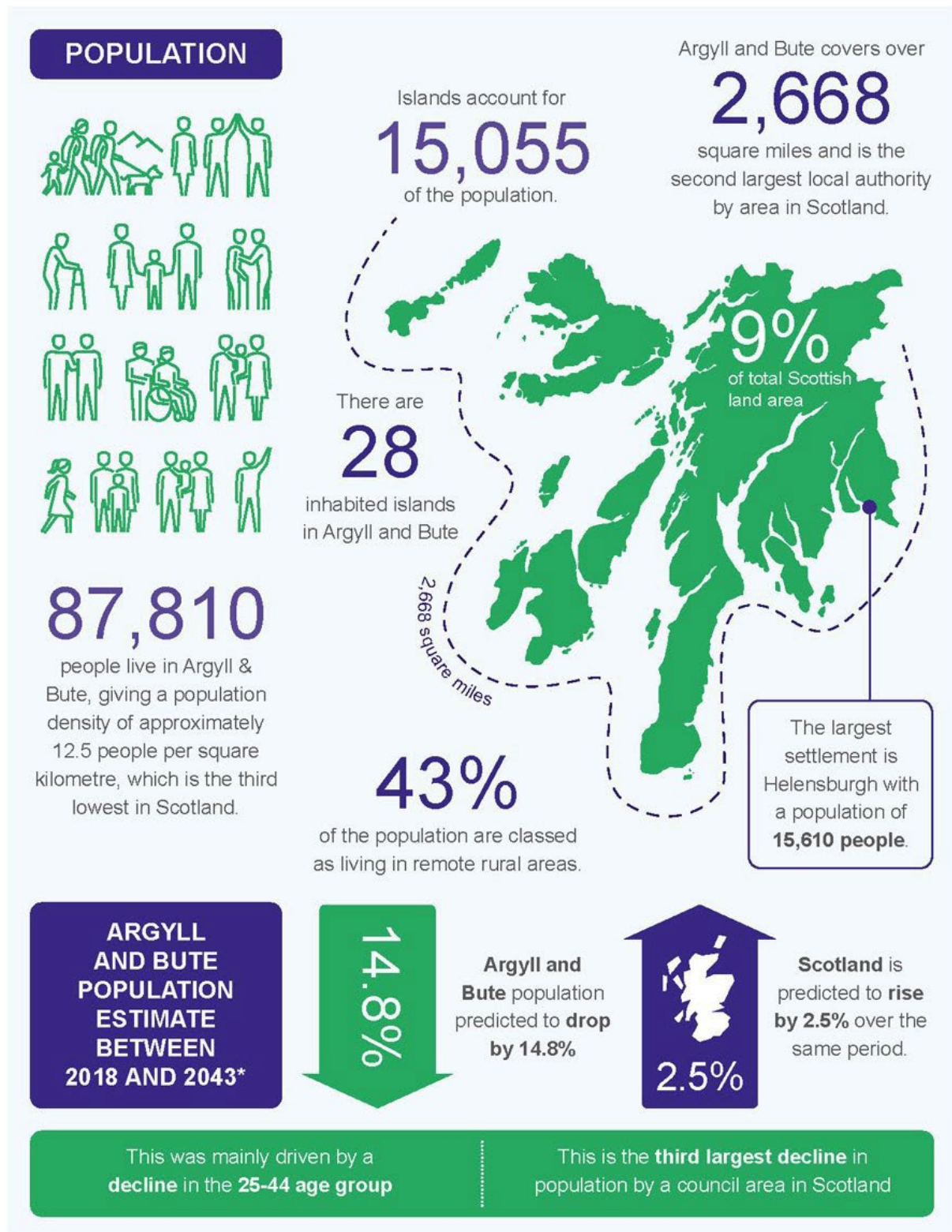


Councillor Jim Lynch
Leader of Argyll and Bute
Council



Pippa Milne
Chief Executive

2. Our Profile



*National Records of Scotland

3. Our Strategic Framework

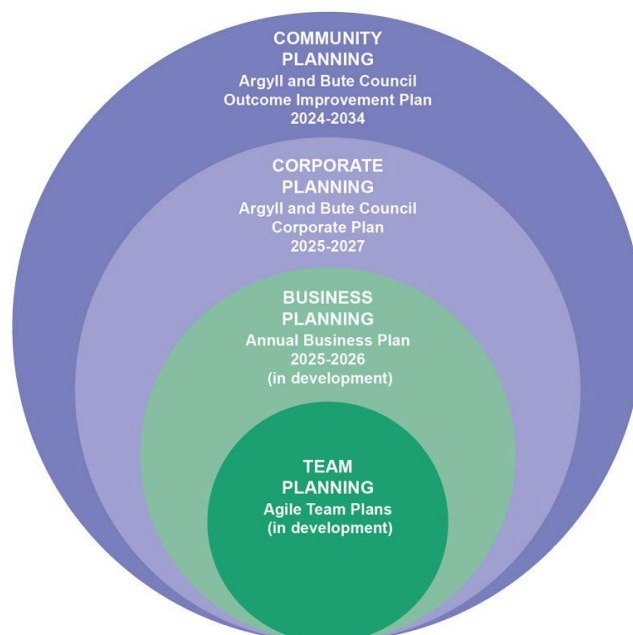
This plan sets the strategic direction for the council, highlighting our key corporate priorities and deliverables for the period until 2027. Our Corporate plan is part of a portfolio of documents that make up our planning framework at corporate level and is the overarching document for our wider Performance and Improvement framework.

Our corporate plan shows how our corporate priorities will contribute to the overall shared vision for our area agreed with our community planning partners, in the Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement plan 2024-2034 (ABOIP).

In addition to our corporate priorities the Council has several strategic objectives, statutory duties and responsibilities. Together, these all ensure that we have financial sustainability and meet the needs of service users across Argyll and Bute. Our annual business plan is where we set out deliverables and monitor performance against these strategic outcomes. Our business 2025-26 plan will be completed and approved following adoption of this corporate plan. At team planning level, we identify core service standards and key operational deliverables.

We are transforming our approach to Performance and Improvement activities, reviewing our Performance and Improvement Framework, and redesigning elements of it to better reflect our Connect for Success principles and modern ways of working.

Our Golden Thread



4. Our Vision

We have a vision for a successful, vibrant Argyll and Bute with a growing population and a thriving economy.
A place where communities and businesses thrive and people want to come to live, to work and to do business.



Vibrant and empowered communities, thriving economy, and positive partnerships are core components of our vision for Argyll and Bute. The ongoing impact of the cost-of-living crisis, housing emergency, predicted population decline and reducing public sector finances are significant challenges we must navigate on the road to achieving our vision for a thriving Argyll and Bute. We will build on our track record of success to achieve the change we want to see for our area.

Vibrant and Empowered Communities

Our vision is for an Argyll and Bute where communities feel listened to, are part of decision making and are empowered to deliver locally tailored projects and services with the support and facilitation of the council as their trusted partner. Where we deliver services, we want to be recognised for consistently delivering impactful results. We have recently designed and launched an engagement toolkit and undertaken several public engagement events. We will use learning from these to continue building positive relationships and partnerships with our communities.

Thriving Economy

Our vision is for an Argyll and Bute where businesses are thriving, serving the needs of visitors and locals, and providing quality local products and employment opportunities. Improved access to quality and affordable housing supports our thriving economy and helps to grow our population.

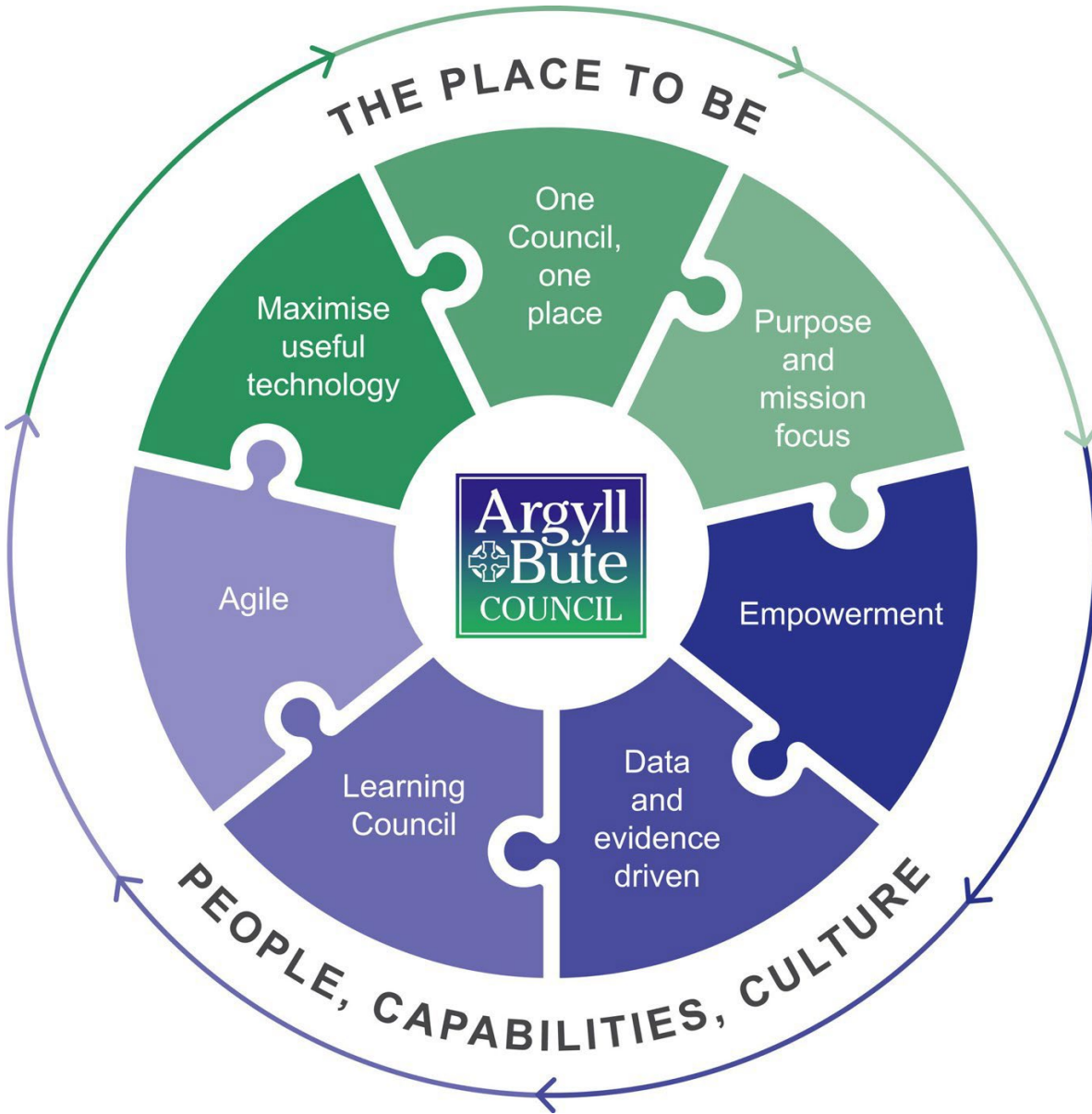
Positive Partnerships

The key to a successful and thriving Argyll and Bute lies in the relationships and partnerships that we develop within and out with our area. Overcoming the challenges we face in achieving our vision of a thriving Argyll and Bute will take teamwork and collaboration with many partners. We will continue to collaborate positively with central government, communities and other partners to ensure the needs and voices of Argyll and Bute are well articulated and understood

5. Our Priorities



We have seven corporate priorities that will shape our policy and decision making over the life of this plan. To deliver on these priorities and overcome the challenges we face, the Council must continue to transform at pace, building on our long-standing culture of innovation and use of digital technology. Our strategic approach to transformation will be underpinned by the principles of Connect for Success:



COMMUNITIES



Empowered and resilient communities – Our communities are as diverse as our geography and have varying needs, challenges, and opportunities – all of which they are well placed to identify. We want to harness that local knowledge with confidence and work together to develop shared priorities.

This priority directly aligns with the Community Wellbeing theme in the ABIOP and will help us to contribute to this shared plan.

To strengthen our collaboration and support for our communities, we will:

Priority	Next Steps / Action
Build stronger connections and collaborations with communities to increase empowerment and make the best use of local knowledge to help shape delivery of local solutions	Meeting people where they live – progressing an engagement programme for senior leadership across and around local communities
Enhance and deepen our understanding of local issues and improve opportunities for collaboration – including launch of the Aspiring Places: Community Projects programme in Argyll and Bute	Use online tools/digital platforms to find ways to reach those not in established groups and start ongoing conversations about local issues
Take forward a piece of work to support Area Committees to reshape their business, decision-making and overall activities to align with existing/emerging local plans and issues, following agreement of Priorities	Once Priorities agreed by Council – Area Committee Chairs to have initial discussion and feed back views to political leadership as first action
Reaffirm our commitment to refugee resettlement, valuing the contribution that new families and residents make to life in Argyll and Bute	Ensure that our approach to refugee resettlement has regard to the availability of housing, employment and skills locally while being delivered through national funding scheme

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



Making Argyll and Bute an attractive choice for families – Giving young people the best start in life, and ensuring we have the right skills for a prosperous future, are key elements of making Argyll and Bute an ideal choice for families to stay or to relocate.

The Argyll and lifestyle already has much to offer and, to play our part in making that more attractive, we will:

Priority	Next Steps / Action
Develop our school curriculums with the jobs of the future in mind, to build up a strong local skills base and help create more opportunities for young people to stay and grow in their own communities.	Look at data from across the Council to identify skills, service delivery and employment needs locally – to shape learning opportunities for the short and medium term which contribute to overall population and economic growth.
Enabling as many young people as possible go from school to positive destinations of all kinds.	Work with partners on local further and higher education provision and apprenticeship opportunities that meet identified skills, service delivery and employment needs.
Explore ways to enhance Argyll and Bute's early learning and childcare offer to support employment and business needs of local families alongside its role in nurture and contribution to access to better life chances for young people.	Identify measures to increase provision with partners.
Enable learners to take full advantage of emerging technology and to be ready for the 'jobs of the future' here in Argyll and Bute.	Pursue opportunities for investment in schools digital network – 21st century digital network for schools and wider education infrastructure.
United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – ensuring that views of children and young people are considered in decision making.	Developing our organisational culture to be receptive to the views of children and young people in our decision-making

Priority	Next Steps / Action
Continue the programme of improvement in our schools so that they are a compelling choice for families, providing good educational attainment and supporting the wellbeing of young people.	Explore options for Education Review.

HOUSING, ECONOMIC GROWTH AND POPULATION



Working to ensure that everyone who needs a home can find one that they can afford, in the right place, and at the right time – Access to housing is a factor in almost every aspect of Argyll and Bute’s crucial growth agenda. It contributes to the success of economic development, recruitment, employment opportunities, service delivery and much more. Argyll and Bute was the first Council in Scotland to declare a Housing Emergency. We must increase pace and be agile, ready to innovate and prepared to do things differently in order to see swift progress.

Shared prosperity and sustainable business growth in Argyll and Bute – We value the impact and return on investment that effective, targeted economic development can have. We recognise that all kinds of resources are increasingly limited and must be used to deliver shared prosperity, sustainable business growth and the best possible outcomes for Argyll and Bute.

People are Argyll and Bute’s most important asset in driving forward opportunities for growth and vibrant local economies – Population growth is crucial to our economic success. Decline impacts on our ability to sustain and deliver services in the future. There is a predicted drop of 14.8% between 2018 and 2043, mainly in the 25 to 44 age group. We have a relatively tight labour market, arising from consistently higher levels of participation and low unemployment, with critical gaps in public services and key business sectors like hospitality and construction. This has been exacerbated in recent years by a decline in the working-age population, migration limitations and higher levels of economic inactivity particularly in the over-50s age group.

This priority directly aligns with the Housing theme in the ABIOP and will help us to contribute to this shared plan.

We will:

Priority	Next Steps / Action
<p>Sharpen focus on the Housing Emergency Action Plan and other plans/delivery bodies as appropriate in line with the pace required in emergency.</p> <p>Refresh and update our Local Housing Strategy.</p> <p>Use policy and fiscal levers at our disposal to speed up delivery – lobby other agencies where required.</p> <p>Seek reform or flexibility on use of Resource Planning Assumption (RPA).</p>	<p>Looking at overarching plans – Argyll and Bute Local Housing Strategy</p> <p>Strategic Housing Investment Plan</p> <p>Local Development Plan</p> <p>Oban and Helensburgh Development Masterplans</p> <p>Using latest data to reframe and target activities and resources to the right places at the right times.</p> <p>Revisit Strategic Housing Fund.</p> <p>Examine scope to reduce time spent in temporary accommodation.</p> <p>Lobbying work</p>
<p>Drive forward in partnership across all sectors to deliver on vital areas like key worker accommodation, mid-market rentals, private sector development in addition to activity on affordable homes.</p>	<p>Engagement and partnership working across all sectors.</p> <p>Local Housing Strategy review to open up greater opportunities for partnership working and securing additional resources to support swifter delivery.</p> <p>Housing Emergency Action Plan.</p>
<p>Explore scope for greater commercialisation of Council assets and otherwise attract external investment for the Council and communities.</p>	<p>Build on the existing foundations to derive further commercial income from Council assets. Explore opportunities for Community Partnerships to divest/operate Council assets. Further develop the approach to community Benefits and the opportunities from planning gain for communities to augment Council funding.</p>

Priority	Next Steps / Action
<p>Take a clear ‘return on investment’ approach to allocations of resources at all levels – prioritise action that brings people, jobs and business to Argyll and Bute through</p> <p>Maximising community benefit opportunities from local development and promote community wealth building.</p>	<p>Agree refreshed Economic Strategies. Development Masterplans.</p> <p>Critical evaluation of activities, financial allocations and requests and how those will translate into employment or growth.</p> <p>Use policy and fiscal levers in our power to stimulate, attract and incentivise growth – for example exploring creation of enterprise zones.</p> <p>Where power to drive growth sits with other agencies, lobby for support to complement the actions we are taking and investments we are making (e.g. fuel, transport costs in rural areas)</p> <p>Engage with Argyll and Bute’s key sectors and major employers in food and drink, tourism, construction, energy and social care to progress shared priorities and work in partnership where possible.</p>
<p>Continue to lead on bringing depopulation to national government attention.</p>	<p>Bringing together group of depopulating local authorities to act together as collective voice.</p> <p>Engage with Scottish Ministers and Ministerial Taskforce.</p>

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY



Keeping people, businesses, goods and services moving through Argyll and Bute

– Argyll and Bute’s geographic mix of rural and island communities mean that transport, infrastructure and digital connectivity are crucial jigsaw pieces in the drive for growth. At the most basic level, we need effective and reliable ways to bring people, goods and services to Argyll and Bute – and to carry our own products. Like transport connectivity, reliable, resilient digital links have a highly significant contribution to make to growing the population and the economy. They can add considerable value to Argyll and Bute’s position as an ideal choice to locate, offering an attractive lifestyle and opportunities to learn, work and do business.

In the same context we need to consider the impact of climate change on that essential infrastructure.

This particular area is complex given our geography and the range of agencies who have responsibility for maintaining the resilience of lifeline connections of all kinds. Our principles of return on investment, partnership working, and speaking up for Argyll and Bute and its people will all come into play here.

This priority directly relates to the Transport Infrastructure theme in the ABIOP and will help us to contribute to this shared plan.

We will:

Priority	Next Steps / Action
<p>Lobbying for national infrastructure investment and interventions where responsibility lies with other agencies – maintaining pressure for delivery at pace of the permanent solution for the A83 Rest and Be Thankful.</p> <p>Political lobbying for urgent action on ferry services which brings the capacity and timetabling needed to support lifeline links and routes to market.</p>	<p>Establish political lobbying group (which will tackle a variety of issues), agree membership and scope.</p> <p>Agree themes/focus of political lobbying activity – including A83, Rest and Be Thankful, A82 upgrade, A85 improvements.</p> <p>Constructive engagement with Scottish and UK Government Ministers.</p>

Priority	Next Steps / Action
Representing to industry and national governments on disproportionate transport, fuel and energy costs which contribute to higher rural poverty/deprivation levels and impact on growth.	Find ways to join our voice with those of communities who tell us this is a priority for them too.
Seek full funding for delivery of internal ferry services, given that responsibility for these sits with Transport Scotland	Pursue formal request for full funding, noting previous shortfall.
Use strong data to develop a Transport Strategy which recognises the significance of connectivity to population and economic growth.	Explore options for full transport study (which can include looking at integration, organisation options) following RIS Review.

ENVIRONMENT



We recognise that climate change represents one of the most significant challenges facing our communities today and in the future. Argyll and Bute Council has demonstrated our commitment through tangible progress, having reduced our carbon emissions by 31% over the past 8 years through sustained investment in energy efficiency and carbon reduction initiatives.

We remain firmly committed to driving down our carbon footprint further, with a clear target of achieving net zero emissions by 2045, aligned with Scottish Government climate objectives. Our interim targets ensure we maintain momentum and accountability throughout this journey.

The Council is building on this foundation through ongoing decarbonisation efforts across our estate, transition to electric vehicles, renewable energy development, and integration of climate considerations across all service areas.

We acknowledge that addressing climate change requires collective action. Argyll and Bute Council works collaboratively with the Community Planning Partnership to develop and implement region-wide climate initiatives that support communities, businesses, and organisations in making their own transition to a low-carbon future.

Through this coordinated approach, we aim to transform our local economy through a just transition to deliver a sustainable, resilient, and net zero Argyll and Bute for current and future generations.

We will:

- Reduce carbon emissions generated by the Council.
- Agree policies in relation to waste, recycling and other environmental issues, which will inform next steps.
- Evaluate Council targets for deliverability and improvement.
- Harness opportunities from expansion of renewable energy sector in the area.

SUSTAINABLE SERVICE DELIVERY



We want to provide the best services we can for the money and resources available and make clear the standards that our communities can expect.

We know that this is very important to local people – Over the remainder of this Council term, local government finances and resources of all kinds will be under more pressure than they’ve ever been. Resource levels will inevitably inform service standards and delivery. We need to be more vigilant than ever before about alignment of investment and action to our priorities. Identifying clear returns and outcomes for Argyll and Bute, from allocations of resources, must be the starting point of action or investment.

Fiscal constraints have put pressure on services and limit what we can deliver. The operations of the Council have risen to the challenge of meeting substantial savings year on year and have approved savings totalling circa £50m over the 10 years to 2025-26. This equates to 15% of the total 2025-26 revenue budget and with each passing year, it becomes more difficult to identify savings.

It is important that our models of service delivery are more efficient and more effective, with clear and achievable standards. We want to transform services efficiently and at pace, building on our track record of innovation and digital transformation and in ways that align with the resources we have – a Council fit for the future.

We will:

Priority	Next Steps / Action
Provide the best services we can with the money available.	Expand the RIS Review approach to other service areas to ensure we have the most effective and efficient delivery models possible. Develop proposals to expand and make the most of digital/technology, including further exploration of AI.
Make clear the service standards that communities can expect with the resources available.	Review, update, communicate clear quality service standards that match with local needs as well as available resources.
Completion and implementation of the Roads and Infrastructure Services (RIS) Review, particularly creation of robust, reliable data to inform decisions.	Progress and implement RIS Review.
Play our part in calling for a fair deal for councils – including asks for greater flexibilities at local level which helps better serve community needs.	Part of work of political lobbying group.

SPEAKING UP FOR ARGYLL AND BUTE, ITS PEOPLE AND ITS COMMUNITIES



Collective, as well as collaborative, action is necessary to deliver growth on the scale that Argyll and Bute needs – No single agency alone can deliver on Argyll and Bute’s overarching aim of significant, vital population and economic growth. We will work in partnership with communities, with all sectors, and at all levels as far as possible to progress Argyll and Bute’s priorities. This will include using our voice as the local authority to call for action where responsibility lies outwith our control or influence.

We will:

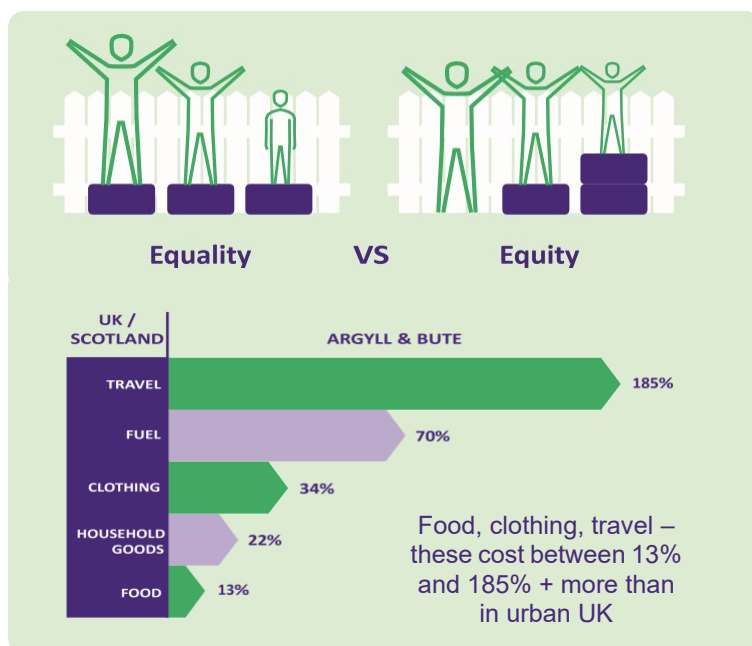
Priority	Next Steps / Action
Call for policy, investment, flexibility, action - wherever there is a key issue impacting on Argyll and Bute’s chances of growth and success and where responsibility sits outwith the control of the Council.	Establish political lobbying group, agree membership, themes, areas for focus as set out throughout the Priorities.
Add our voice as the local authority to those of our communities when they are speaking out on issues that are important to them and where external action is needed.	Identify needs and opportunities through engagement programme and planned online/digital democracy activities.
Lobby for more investment in digital connectivity to boost Argyll and Bute’s status as an attractive place to live.	Lobby for digital connectivity improvements to fill the gap in terms of other opportunities which are available and funded elsewhere in Scotland, but which are not practical here due to geography (e.g. active travel).

6. Our Challenges and Risks

Cost of Living

The ongoing cost of living crisis in the UK is felt particularly hard in rural and remote rural areas. Argyll and Bute has:

- The highest percentage of people living in remote rural areas of all mainland Councils
- Nearly 70% of all households in Argyll and Bute are at risk of fuel poverty or extreme fuel poverty
- Despite our relatively high cost of living the average gross weekly pay for full time workers in Argyll and Bute is £682, compared with a Scottish Average of £702 (NOMIS, 2024)



Housing Emergency

Argyll and Bute Council was the first Local Authority in Scotland to declare a housing emergency in June 2023. This emergency is due to a complex range of challenges including:

- High numbers on the housing waiting list
- High homelessness
- Low numbers of new tenancies created
- Unaffordable house prices (the average house price is up to 7 times the average wage)
- 5% less social rented stock than the Scottish Average
- The highest level of second homes ownership in Scotland (6% against the Scottish average of 0.9%).

In June 2024 a [housing emergency action plan](#) was agreed and the Council, together with our partners, are working to deliver on this plan.

Financial Outlook

Despite an increase in overall Scottish Government funding for 2025/26, the financial outlook for Scotland's councils remains challenging. At its budget setting meeting in February 2025 Argyll and Bute Council considered the latest budget gap projections for the period to 2030 these included a best case scenario of £13.3m and worst case scenario of £55.9m.

The most recent Accounts Commission report 'Local Government in Scotland – Financial Bulletin 2023/24' outlines that councils need to intensify transformation activity, progressing at scale and pace to ensure their financial sustainability. How councils plan to use their reserves, make savings and transform their services needs to become more transparent. The need to consult local communities and clearly communicate the implications for local services of the budget decisions taken has never been more important.

Risks

Many of the challenges facing the Council are intrinsically affected by external socio-economic, environmental, and geo-political uncertainties as well as ongoing financial challenges. The Council has Strategic Risk Register which identifies, assesses and mitigates these. The strategic risk register is regularly reviewed and scrutinised by the Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee.

7. Our Success measures

This Plan will be underpinned by a set of corporate outcomes that will provide streamlined and focussed performance reporting and key performance indicators. This will allow us to improve on our Public Performance Reporting. The outcomes will detail our aspirations at a high level in addressing the priorities across the identified themes. Through this we will demonstrate the impact of our work over the Council term.

Corporate Plan

2025 - 2027

Argyll and Bute Council

www.argyll-bute.gov.uk



Bute • Helensburgh • Islay • Oban • Mull • Campbeltown • Iona • Dunoon • Tiree • Lochgilphead •

#abplace2b