



Argyll and Bute Council
Annual Business Plan 2025/26

COMMUNITIES

Empowered and resilient Communities

Priority	Details	Next Steps/Action	Business Plan Activity	Success Measure
CPD01	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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roll out and raise awareness of Community Engagement Framework and its associated training and guidance which was approved in December 2024. Take forward actions of Community Planning Partnership Improvement Plan to better connect with communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish Community Engagement Guidance. Launch Community Engagement Training. Promote Community Engagement Framework to staff and make available on MyCouncilWorks for all. Complete actions within Community Planning Partnership Improvement Plan relating to improving connections with communities. 100% completion by 31st March 2026.
CPD02	Enhance and deepen our understanding of local issues and improve opportunities for collaboration including	Use online tools/digital platforms to find ways to reach those not in established groups and start ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design, develop, launch and grow online platform 'Aspiring Places'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit to Members by close of financial year a business case assessment, options

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CPD02 continued	launch of the Aspiring Places: Community Projects programme in Argyll and Bute.	conversations about local issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Area Community Planning Groups to develop action plans. • Continue to provide support to groups on Local Place Plans. 	<p>and recommendation on future of platform.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capture a minimum of 36 community projects on the platform. • Complete four Area Community Planning Group Action Plans. • Deliver two training sessions and one event for groups on Local Place Plans. Event bringing groups who have produced plans together to share experiences and discuss next steps.
LRS01	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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist the Council's Administration to develop and establish a governance structure for Area Committees that supports the Council's Priorities. • Work around any proposed governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish the agreed governance arrangements for Area Committees.

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LRS01 continued			<p>structure will be taken forward once a position is agreed by the Administration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependent on what is agreed, there may need to be updates made to the Council's constitution. 	
LRS02	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.	As part of ongoing participation in the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme, UK Resettlement Scheme and Ukrainian sponsorship schemes, develop and publish strategy.	Deliver the Refugee and Asylum Strategy by November 2026.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Making Argyll and Bute an attractive choice for families

Priority	Details	Next Steps/Action	Business Plan Activity	Success Measure
EDU01	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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and challenge establishments to design a curriculum which is relevant, engaging and meets the needs of all learners. Develop strong partnerships (we already have an Argyll and Bute Employability partnership that needs to be recognised) to broaden and improve work-based vocational learning opportunities. Deliver targeted and universal support to further develop our children and young people's STEM skills (a key aspect of this is the development of the STEM Hubs in Dunoon Grammar and at Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS/Dunbeg). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaver Initial Positive Destinations 98.0% Leaver Sustained Positive Destinations 96.5% P1,4,7 stretch aims in Literacy / Numeracy will be met: Literacy, overall - 76% Q1 - 75% / Q5 - 85% Gap Q1/Q5 - 10pp Numeracy, overall - 83% Q1 - 78% / Q5 - 91% Gap Q1/Q5 - 13pp participation measure stretch aims will be met: Overall, 95% Q1 - 92.5% / Q5 - 97% Gap - 4.5pp

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EDU01 continued			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broaden and improve different curriculum pathways and opportunities including work-based vocational learning opportunities for all young people, improving vocational educational provision in schools and developing stronger partnerships with employers and agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SQA attainment at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher will exceed national averages.
EDU02	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 future employment needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further develop approaches to tracking of young people's pathways within school and in the period after leaving school to ensure appropriate support, guidance and opportunities are in place to gain and sustain positive destinations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaver Initial Positive Destinations 98.0% Leaver Sustained Positive Destinations 96.5% Participation measure stretch aims will be met: Overall, 95% Q1 - 92.5% / Q5 - 97% Gap - 4.5pp
EDU03	Explore ways to enhance Argyll and Bute's early learning and childcare offer to	Identify measures to increase provision with partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration with Scottish Child Minding Association to recruit more child minders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number of childminders to three through

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EDU03 continued	support employment and business needs of local families alongside its role in nurture and contribution to access to better life chances for young people.		<p>Note the current work being taken forward by the Argyll and Bute.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employability Partnership to provide training support for individuals to become childminders. • Continuing to develop our 'grow our own' approach to training Modern Apprentices to deliver child care. 	<p>Scottish Child Minding Association.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of trained Modern Apprentices to three
EDU04	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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade and modernise the education digital network infrastructure to enhance cyber security and support innovative and flexible learning. • Evaluate school Wi-Fi performance to identify areas where improved connectivity would enhance the learning experience for pupils and staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver new network by December 2026. • Commence project to upgrade education network including appointment of additional ICT engineer. • Complete review of 100% of school WiFi. • Government approval of full STEM Hub South

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EDU04 continued			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include STEM hubs through Rural Growth Deal. • Migrate schools to Microsoft Office 365 to enhance collaboration, productivity, and security, providing them with the same robust tools and flexibility as corporate users. • Explore funding options to bring all school purchased devices into a suitable and sustainable computer replacement programme. 	<p>business justification case</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migrate 100% of schools to MS Office 365. • Develop Business Case for inclusion of all school devices into Council's computer replacement programme.
EDU05	<p>United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – ensuring that views of children and young people are considered in decision-making.</p>	<p>Developing our organisational culture to be receptive to the views of children and young people in our decision-making.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support establishments on their journey to achieving 'Rights Respecting' accreditation. • Develop partnership working in order to ensure that the 	<p>Increase in number of schools and settings with Rights Respecting School accreditation by June 2026: 18 Gold, 40 Silver, 20 Bronze (74% of our schools at Silver/Gold).</p>

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EDU05 continued			<p>Children’s Rights agenda underpins the work of our establishments and services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support establishments to ensure that their curriculum celebrates and promotes children's rights. 	
EDU06	<p>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.</p>	<p>Explore options from Education Service Review.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support establishments in developing and utilising a range of pedagogical approaches to ensure high quality experiences for all learners. • Support building professional capacity in the effective use of data to support improved attainment. • Support establishments’ approaches to literacy and numeracy through targeted and universal support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P1,4,7 stretch aims in Literacy / Numeracy will be met: Literacy, overall - 76% Q1 - 75% / Q5 - 85% Gap Q1/Q5 - 10pp Numeracy, overall - 83% Q1 - 78% / Q5 - 91% Gap Q1/Q5 - 13pp • S3 ACEL Literacy/Numeracy 3rd level or better Literacy 90%, Numeracy 92.5%

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EDU06 continued			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase focus on improving Secondary attainment at both Broad General Education and Senior Phase. • Establishments and the Central Team work to engage in strategic planning, implementation and evaluation which promotes a culture of ambition and continuous improvement. • Continue to support and challenge establishments to review and reflect on embedding nurturing approaches and embed trauma informed practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary stretch aims will be met: School Leavers with 1 or more pass at ALL SCQF Level 5, overall - 93% Q1 - 89% / Q5 - 100% Gap Q1/Q5 - 11pp School Leavers with 1 or more pass at ALL SCQF Level 6, overall - 69% Q1 - 63% / Q5 - 89% Gap Q1/Q5 - 26pp Nurture stretch aim will be met: Overall, 70% • Attendance stretch aims will be met Primary, overall - 94.5% FSM reg - 91% Non FSM - 94.4% Gap - 3.5pp * Secondary, overall - 92% FSM reg - 85% Non

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EDU06 continued			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve approaches to supporting young people with additional support needs or who are care experienced • Support schools to improve children and young people's attendance. 	<p>FSM - 92% Gap - 7pp</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SQA attainment at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher will exceed national averages. • Increase in five establishments progressing through Our Children, Their Nurturing Education framework. June 2026: 60% June 2027: 70%.

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. Shared prosperity and sustainable business growth in Argyll and Bute. People are Argyll and Bute’s most important asset in driving forward opportunities for growth and vibrant local economies

Priority	Details	Next Steps/Action	Business Plan Activity	Success Measure
DEG01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharpen focus on the Housing Emergency Action Plan and other plans/delivery bodies as appropriate in line with the pace required in emergency. Refresh and update our Local Housing Strategy. Use policy and fiscal levers at our disposal to speed up delivery - lobby other agencies where required. Seek reform or flexibility on use of Resource Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look at overarching plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Argyll and Bute Local Housing Strategy Strategic Housing Investment Plan Local Development Plan Oban and Helensburgh Development Masterplans Using latest data to reframe and target activities and resources to the right places at the right times. Revisit Strategic Housing Fund. Examine scope to reduce time spent in temporary accommodation. Lobbying work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activity from Economic Strategy Action Plan, 2025-2028 (focus on actions for 2025-26): Complete mapping of second homes and short-term lets to inform the delivery of Planning Control Zones. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present proposals for Planning Control Zones for Short Term Lets to Council in spring 2026. Manage progress of Oban Strategic Development Framework and Helensburgh Strategic Development Framework according to project plan. Have a regularly updated online mapping tool based on Short Term Lets published Register.

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DEG01 continued	Assumption (RPA).			
DEG02	Drive forward in partnership across all sectors to deliver on vital areas like keyworker accommodation, mid-market rentals, private sector development in addition to activity on affordable homes.	<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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employ consultant to support Housing Needs and Demand Assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult to inform delivery of new Housing Needs and Demand Assessment which will underpin future Local Housing Strategy and the Local Development Plan 3.
DEG03	Explore scope for greater commercialisation of Council assets and otherwise attract external investment for the Council and communities.	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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the delivery of the essential infrastructure works at Kilmory Business Park. Create new business space at Oban Airport. Lease or sell assets freed up by Our Modern Workspace or other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certify Practical Completion of works at Kilmory Business Park. Phase 2 by early 2025/26. Design and Build Development Agreement is finalised for the delivery of initial

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DEG03 continued		opportunities from planning gain for communities to augment Council funding.	services transformation programmes.	<p>works at Oban Airport and commence construction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate commercial income that can be invested into Council priorities. • Set up of new Marriage Room Venue at Kilmory for 2026 wedding season.
DEG04	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 maximising community benefit opportunities from local development and promote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree refreshed Economic Strategies. • Development Masterplans. • Critical evaluation of activities, financial allocations and requests and how those will translate into employment or growth. • Use policy and fiscal levers in our power to stimulate, attract and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commence Stage 2b and Stage 2c works on the Rothesay Pavilion.” • Delivery of the SMART actions for 2025-2026 in the Economic Strategy Action Plan, 2025-2028, with a focus on actions under the four strategic priorities of People, Place, Planet and Prosperity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual review of the Economic Strategy Action Plan in April/May each year. • Drawdown of 2025/26 Rothesay Pavilion funding. • Endorsement of: Rothesay Pavilion Full Business Case. Kintyre Sea Sports Full Business Case.

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DEG04 continued	community wealth building.	<p>incentivise growth – for example exploring creation of enterprise zones.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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). • 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.(see Economic Strategy Action Plan, 2025-2028). 		<p>Tobermory Housing Full Business Case.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorsement of revised Economic Strategy Action Plan 2025-2028 by EDI Committee. • Complete measures set out in the Economic Strategy Action Plan 2025-2028.
DEG05	Continue to lead on bringing depopulation to national government attention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bringing together group of depopulating local authorities to act together as collective voice. 	Ongoing participation of the Settlement Project Support Officer, Economic Growth (part funded by the Scottish Government) with key external partners, in	Delivery of key actions for 2025-2026 to retain and attract people to live, work and study in Argyll and Bute as outlined in the EDI

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DEG05 continued		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with Scottish Ministers and Ministerial Taskforce. 	particular the Highland and Western Isles Councils through the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership Population Working Group. Feed activity into the Scottish Government Addressing Depopulation Action Plan.	Committee paper: Item 4 Latest Update on the Settlement Project Support Officer Actions Agenda Document for Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY**Keeping people, businesses, goods and services moving through Argyll and Bute**

Priority	Details	Next Steps/Action	Business Plan Activity	Success Measure
DEG06	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.	Continue to engage with Transport Scotland with as realistic projections as possible within the time scale.	Submit projected running costs to Transport Scotland on schedule.
DEG07	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 the Roads and Infrastructure (RIS) Review.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work alongside Economic Growth colleagues. • Undertake transport issues consultation. 	Approve Draft Local Transport Strategy by the end of March 2026 for public consultation.

ENVIROMENT

The Council has already declared a climate emergency and must continue to keep this issue as a primary consideration

Priority	Details	Next Steps/Action	Business Plan Activity	Success Measure
COM01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	After agreement of policies, agree and implement SMART measures.	Delivery of a Net Zero tracker and new Net Zero Routemap (which will supersede current decarbonisation plan).	Evidence of being 'on track' to becoming a Net Zero Organisation by 2045 by annual submission to the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties being in a downwards trajectory from the previous year. This is not a trend measure.
DEG08	Harness opportunities from expansion of renewable energy sector in the area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore potential community/Council benefits from renewables projects. Revisit exploration of renewables projects on Council land. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council continues to engage with a number of renewable energy developers on a range of local projects including some of national significance. The Council are particularly keen to support a future servicing base in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council and key stakeholders to endorse a Social Value Charter in 2026. Support developers to invest in local renewable energy projects across the region.

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DEG08 continued			<p>Argyll and Bute which could secure considerable investment and long-term economic benefits to the region. We continue to lobby developers for enhanced community benefits and are currently developing a social value charter for renewable energy developments. This will be a collaborative framework to ensure renewable energy developments deliver widespread social and economic benefits across Argyll and Bute.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council continues to explore opportunities for renewable energy projects across our estate including a potential solar farm within the Kilmory Estate. Low carbon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Endorsement of Treasury 5 Full Business Case by Central Government. Secure Central Government endorsement to include funding for a solar farm within the Kilmory Estate as part of the Council's Rural

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DEG08 continued			projects are also being scoped as part of a £3m investment via the Rural Growth Deal.	Growth Deal Programme.

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 really important to local people

Priority	Details	Next Steps/Action	Business Plan Activity	Success Measure
EDU07	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.	Education Review is complete, published and agreed by full Council in November 2025.	Establish governance, timeline and working groups by March 2026.
CSS01	Provide the best services we can with the money available.	Develop proposals to expand and make the most of digital/technology, including further exploration of AI.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the migration of M365 with additional functionality including full Teams telephony available from fixes and mobile devices. • Complete pilot of Copilot AI technology across M365 services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of Concept for conversational AI complete. • Contact Centre successfully upgraded. • Complete the implementation of the Customer Service Strategy • Action Plan to schedule by end of March 2026. • M365 fully implemented and operational.

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CSS01 continued				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copilot Proof of Concept successfully launched by January 2026.
CSS02	<p>Make clear the service standards that communities can expect with the resources available.</p>	<p>Review, update, communicate clear quality service standards that match with local needs as well as available resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete pilot of core business dashboards and roll out. • Make our performance information easily accessible to the public. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 98% of eligible teams have scorecard to monitor their agreed core business service standards. • Review and improvements to the Performance Reporting section of the website and complete in accordance with Performance Excellence Project.
RIS01	<p>Completion and implementation of the RIS Review, particularly creation of robust, reliable data to inform decisions.</p>	<p>Progress and implement RIS Review.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise the reshaping of structure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RIS 3rd tier restructure complete by end of calendar year 2025. 4th tier restructure due to be complete by spring 2026.

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RIS01 continued			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further progress the Roads and Information Asset Management Systems improvement project to deliver improvements to customer service and the data required to improve service efficiency. • Continue the review of commercial waste income to maximise the level of income being achieved by the Council. • Continue work to improve project management across RIS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to digital reporting of road defects by public achieved and operating well. • Increase in income through commercial waste collection service – savings target of £700k. • Create project management centre of excellence within RIS.

SPEAKING UP FOR ARGYLL AND BUTE, IT’S PEOPLE AND IT’S COMMUNITIES

Collective, as well as collaborative, action is necessary to deliver growth on the scale that Argyll and Bute needs

Priority	Details	Next Steps/Action	Business Plan Activity	Success Measure
CEX01	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.	Develop and implement a leadership engagement programme during 2025 and build on this for 2026 and 2027.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a minimum of eight leadership-led engagement events. • Engage with minimum of 150 people. • Deliver a minimum of eight community group visits. • Deliver a minimum of eight micro business visits. • Achieve Attendee Usefulness score of minimum 3.5. • Achieve Council is Listening score of minimum 3.8.

Speaking Up for Argyll and Bute - everyone has a part to play in Argyll and Bute's success

In our Priorities for the Council Term 2022 to 2027, we have set out our areas for action to deliver our vision for Argyll and Bute. There are elements of that vision which require action from other agencies at all levels - from our communities right up to national government. We will commit to working in partnership wherever we need to as well as calling on others, with responsibility, to take the action that is required to safeguard Argyll and Bute's success. This will include:

- (1) Assisting the Council's administration to develop and establish a governance structure for a political lobby group that supports the Council's priorities.
- (2) Developing a Local Transport Strategy for Argyll, and Active Travel Strategy and undertake full public consultation and incorporate as appropriate.
- (3) Securing external funding to achieve the objectives set out in the Local Transport Strategy and Active Travel Strategy.
- (4) Continuing to bid for Road Safety Funding (activity) in excess of £100k.
- (5) Proactively seek external funding to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Argyll and Bute Flexible Food Fund. This will enable the fund to continue providing essential support for those experiencing food and fuel poverty beyond March 2026, strengthening our ability to respond to community needs and financial challenges.
- (6) Holding regular meetings with Scottish Government and BT Openreach.