

## **Argyll and Bute – support for council funding**

With another multi-million budget gap forecast in next year's budget, the council invited people locally to show support for fair funding for council services, and through that, to support the work councils and CoSLA do to campaign for local government funding. You can [find information about budget planning on our website](#).

Over 8 weeks more than 500 people said yes to fair funding and given comments on why council services are so vital.

We provide a summary of those below. This feedback underlines the key role councils play in society nationally as well as communities locally.

### **Council services as vital in society**

- Scottish councils urgently need fair funding because the impact of chronic underinvestment is already plain to see: Scotland faces some of the worst educational and drug-related outcomes in Europe, and the local services that could turn this around are on the brink of collapse. For years, councils have been expected to shoulder growing social, educational, and care pressures with shrinking budgets, leaving schools, social care, youth work, housing support, and community services stripped back to the bone. Without sustainable investment, councils cannot prevent further decline and Scotland cannot hope to improve the life chances and wellbeing of its people.
- Without effective, well staffed council services society as a whole suffers from education to the environment, roads to refuse and recycling, housing and planning for future needs as well managing the here and now.
- Fairly distributed council services are the cornerstone of healthy, robust and flourishing communities.
- Council services are the bedrock, the foundations of our society. Education, transport, waste management, housing, care services for all ages, road infrastructure. And of course crisis response when required. The list is endless.....
- What our local councils provide are more essential than anything else, help for vulnerable and elderly people, maintaining our roads and infrastructure. Providing local services for culture, exercise, activities - all of these things are threadbare now and undermining all of us. Please fund our local councils properly.
- Vital for physical, emotional and mental health of the people and the continued development of economic growth and development of communities.
- Council services are essential to protect the most vulnerable, support the day-to-day wellbeing and cohesion of our communities, and the wider economic and environmental health of our society.
- I know that council services matter to me and everyone in this community. The knock on effects of not having them are great whether it's educational for up and coming generations,

jobs, roads, waste, transportation. These things can make or break communities in this tough economic climate it's even more important services should stay intact not be paired down. I'd even argue that due to the financial situation we find ourselves this is when we need more council spending rather than less.

- Council services touch on all aspects of day-to-day life in every community. These deserve proper funding, something which the government is neglecting to do - particularly in rural areas, where delivering services is far more challenging and expensive than in urban areas. This needs to be urgently addressed.
- Council Services are the lifeblood of the local community and are even more essential in remote Highland areas.
- No one else is going to educate our children, empty our bins and keep our piers and harbours in good order
- The Council offers services which no other organisation does.
- All aspects of our lives are affected by the services delivered by the Council. Loss or reduction in these would have negative impact.

#### **Councils as employers and drivers for growth**

- The Council is a major employer in rural Argyll and therefore has a very big impact on population numbers.
- If the region is to avoid depopulation, particularly amongst working age groups, essential services must be funded and protected. Failure to adequately resource social and economic drivers influencing health, social care, housing, transportation, and community infrastructure will simply act to drive those who can, to move away. Fair Government funding for Scotland's rural and island communities is imperative

#### **Importance of local-level action**

- As a member of an island community, and part of the larger network of often remote communities across Argyll and Bute, I am profoundly aware of the need for the resilient and reliable infrastructure and services that our council provides, under the most difficult budgetary conditions. I understand the budget challenges of our central government but it is at the local level that much of the real work that support individuals and community wellbeing is done. The correct funding model must be to first support enduring local needs and efforts and then manage what is left for central services and not the other way round. Council funding has already been cut by too much, crippling needed services and choking community led initiatives. Please recognise that the way forward for a vibrant Scotland lies as much or more in local initiatives, and with a fair distribution of funding for our councils, even at the expense of national projects, which may more easily get the attention of central government decision-makers.

#### **Impact on other public sector organisations of cuts to council services**

- Council services are the bedrock, the foundations of our society. Education, transport, waste management, housing, care services for all ages, road infrastructure. And of course crisis

response when required. The list is endless. Underfunding council services is shortsighted; they are preventative resources. Remove them and in many cases the cost simply transfers to the NHS or the Police.

- Council services are the backbone of our community. Not everything can be picked up by the third sector. Services have been getting cut back year on year because of funding cuts. This is not good financial sense. Loss of services from the Council results in higher costs being incurred by other service providers because of the impact on the physical and mental health of individuals.
- Funding needs to be agreed much earlier, and for more than just one year. We all need council services to support normal life.

### **Support generally for funding**

- Council services support the sustainability and vitality of our community. The cuts to funding are impacting the most vulnerable in our society and that can't be something that any of us supports.
- Our council has more inhabited islands than any other local authority, while also covering a large landmass, prone to the effects of adverse weather, and a mix of urban and rural populations. This needs to be recognised by the government in our funding settlement.
- Argyll & Bute is at a distinct disadvantage owing to its huge area, including islands, sparse population and the need to maintain marine and onshore facilities. It should be more of a special case when funding allocations are computed.
- We do not have to accept a reduction in council funding. We must demand suitable funding from Central Government. We must fight for adequate funding - there is always money for fighting wars, it's time we insist on fighting for our essential local services and not accept underfunding for our local councils and a consequent decline in our local council infrastructures!
- The Scottish Government need to provide the funding required to All local authorities to bring our country back up to a level playing field and one that is on a par with our European Counterparts and stop dragging us down. We need to see steady improvements year on year, not neglect and deprivation. Unfortunately, this does not happen with 'savings', this only happens with funding - fair and equal funding across the country.