

Challenge, change and progress – Council agrees its budget

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Protecting core services and jobs, delivering what people want, and building prosperity were the priorities driving decisions made at today's budget meeting of Argyll and Bute Council.

Council Leader, Councillor Dick Walsh explained:

"The decisions we have made today mean that, despite significant financial challenges, we can continue to deliver a huge range of services. We can provide much of what our communities have told us they want. We can invest in regeneration and the prosperity Argyll and Bute deserves.

This is a time of unprecedented challenge for local government. Drastically reduced funding means we had a savings target of over £10 million in 2016/17 alone. This means change.

This budget is about making change work for Argyll and Bute.

Careful financial planning, delivering efficiencies in our work, and investing over the past two years in the core services people have told us matter— education, supporting vulnerable people, roads and infrastructure – together mean that we are in a better position than many other councils.

The extent of our challenge however is significant.

Delivering a balanced budget in these financial circumstances needs decisions we would rather not have to make. We would love to do everything our communities want us to. Since cuts to our funding rule that out, our focus is on doing as much of what our communities want from us as we can.

We have listened to what people told us matters to them.

We have maintained funding support for the youngest and vulnerable members of our communities – support for early years work, community transport and debt advice will continue wholly or in part. We have maintained funding for many services, from bridge maintenance to hanging baskets, that help keep Argyll and Bute an attractive place to be.

Where we have taken savings, we have focused on innovation and efficiency, not least by reducing the elected member budget by £150,000. We will pursue management savings as part of our transformation journey.

We are doing all possible to keep unavoidable job losses to a minimum, and will use our tried and tested methods to ensure, as much as we can, that there is a place for everyone who wants to continue working for Argyll and Bute Council."

Delivering more say for local communities was also a key feature in decisions made.

Councillor Walsh said:

"People have told us they want more say about what happens in their communities. We will focus therefore over the next twelve months on giving more power to local areas, involving them in prioritising local spending on a range of issues that matter to them. The need to make savings and to transform how we work is long term. Working in partnership will ensure we make the best use of whatever resources we have."

The Council will continue to invest in Argyll and Bute's Single Outcome Agreement aims, to build the economy through a growing population.

Councillor Walsh explained:

"Our children and grandchildren deserve the chance many of us have had, to grow up and live their lives here in Argyll and Bute. That needs a vibrant economy. We have ensured therefore that we are in a position to invest in creating economic growth. Our

package of measures will see an investment, from our financial reserves and capital funding, of some £75 million designed to attract more people to live and work here, securing employment and prosperity for our area.

These are challenging times. We are determined to make change work for Argyll and Bute.”

Facts and figures

- Council tax remains unchanged with Band D set at £1,178
- Total revenue budget for 2016/17 is £237.176m. This funds year on year delivery of services. 80% of this funding comes from the Scottish Government. This is the funding that has been reduced.
- Capital funding supports one-off expenditure on infrastructure. This comes from capital grants from the Scottish Government, the sale of council assets and financial borrowing.
- Of the savings options consulted on, those accepted or rejected are listed below.
- Options rejected mean that the number of job losses falls from a potential 184 in 2016/17 to 82 FTE. Over 450 Council employees have expressed interest in voluntary redundancy.
- The Council delivered its £10 million+ savings target by:
 - Rejecting savings options to the value of £1.402m (68 FTE jobs secured)
 - Accepting in part only (an additional 32 FTE jobs secured or in full savings options to the value of £5.186m (82 FTE in 2016/17)
 - Identifying over £1 million in savings that do not impact on policy or job losses.
 - Agreeing Councillor, management and other staff savings (such as travel and overtime) of £944,000
 - A package of additional measures ranging including a total 6% increase to the council's income-generating fees and charges.

Options rejected

- EDUC05g Reduce subsidy payments to community swimming pools
- EDUC07a Reduce primary school classroom assistants by 20%
- EDUC07d Reduce primary school janitor costs by 20%
- EDUC07k Stop lunch payments for primary school supervision staff
- EDUC08a Reduce secondary school classroom assistants by 20%
- EDUC08c Reduce secondary school janitor costs by 20%
- EDUC08g Reduce school technician costs by 20%
- EDUC08k Stop lunch payments for secondary school supervision staff
- CC02a Reduce Adult Learning/Literacies service availability
- CSS02k End discretionary non-domestic rates relief for charities
- FS03m Remove out of hours property emergency line cover
- FS04G Remove discretionary Community Transport Grant funding
- PRS04g Reduce debt counselling service to focus on complex cases
- RAMS01c Removal of hanging baskets
- RAMS01d Close 43 public conveniences across Argyll and Bute
- RAMS01f Replace annual bedding display with grass areas
- RAMS01k Reduce Environmental Warden Team
- RAMS01o Additional Roads and Amenity Service staff reduction
- RAMS02a Reduce coastal and flooding work budgets
- RAMS02b Reduce bridge assessment budget
- RAMS03c Reduce budget for road works/bridge repairs
- RAMS05d Removal of food waste collection, Helensburgh area
- SF01F Further review of Strategic Finance team
- Value of options rejected - £1.402mm (62FTE jobs secured)

Savings options accepted in part or in full

- SF01a Review of staffing structure within Strategic Finance
- CC02b Adult Literacies and Learning – reduce spend in areas based on needs assessment
- CC03a Reduce cost of combined community development and community planning teams
- CC03b Provide reduced amount of third sector grant funding – full saving in first year, with 10% in 17/18 and 10% in 18/19
- CC03c Introduce consistent management arrangements for four community centres
- CC05/1, CC05a, CC10a, CC11a, CC11a/1 Create a charitable leisure trust to bring together council owned community halls, libraries, swimming pools and fitness facilities
- CC06a Provide reduced level of funding support for events and festivals
- CC06b Offer Campbelltown Museum for community ownership
- CC006c Provide reduced level of funding for arts development
- CC08a Provide reduced level of funding to energy and mediation advice services where other opportunities are available and where there is less demand for service
- CC08b Align funding for rent deposit scheme to current demand
- CC08c Reduce budget for housing IT, strategy development and staff training following major work done in 2014/15
- CC08d Reduce staffing costs re promotion of housing information/capacity for partnership work
- CC08e Save council funds by transferring strategic staff costs to Strategic Housing Fund
- CC10b Reduce library management costs
- CC10c Saving of £50,000 on mobile library service
- CC12A Provide reduced level of funding for domestic abuse outreach support
- CC12b Provide reduced level of funding for tenancy support contracts
- EDUC01a Align disability access budget (for adaptations in education centres) with current demand following previous underspend
- EDUC01b Review Service Level Agreement for home and hospital tuition in line with previous demand
- EDUC01c Reduce education Quality Improvement Team materials budget
- EDUC01d Align specialist equipment budget with demand following previous underspend
- EDUC01e Reprioritise repairs and maintenance budget for Education HQ
- EDUC01h Manage cover for ASN assistants from within current devolved budget at individual schools
- EDUC01i Deliver ASN efficiencies and match resources to greatest assessed need
- EDUC03a Continue to provide statutory duties only for children under 5 – part saving only
- EDUC03b Budget levels reduced for pre-5 resources – part saving only
- EDUC03d Reduction in Early Years third sector grants and services – part saving only
- EDUC03e Part saving (10%) in Early Years Change Fund
- EDUC03c Provide for a 1% inflationary uplift only on payments to Early Learning and Child Care Commissioned providers (in line with current indicators)
- EDUC05a Reduce central administrative support
- EDUC05c Provide reduced level of funding for PE facilities matched to priorities
- EDUC05d Janitorial cover availability reduced
- EDUC05e Education central repairs budget reduced and prioritised
- EDUC05h Remove Attendance Officer posts and use current processes and systems in place to manage attendance
- EDUC05j Align clothing grant budget to current demand following previous underspend
- EDUC02b Provide reduced level of creative arts programmes in schools
- EDUC02c Increase fees for non statutory music tuition, reduced to 44% to accommodate inflation
- EDUC02d Instrumental instructor provision reduced by 20%
- EDUC07b Accept 5% reduction only in clerical assistants in primary schools, prioritizing support provided
- EDUC07c Pupil Support Assistants to be matched to greatest assessed need – part reduction (10%) only (equates to 111 fewer hours per year across 30 primary schools)
- EDUC07e Continue primary school supply teacher cover at reduced level
- EDUC07f Remove management development and training budget (primary schools)
- EDUC07g Prioritise primary school grounds maintenance work to manage 20% resource reduction
- EDUC07h Reduce devolved budgets for individual schools as they are supplementary to central education budget, prioritizing expenditure
- EDUC07i Provide foreign language training through Scottish Government Languages 1+2 budget
- EDUC12a Provide statutory Educational Psychology services following 7% budget reduction
- EDUC12b Align residential schools budget to current demand following reduced demand
- EDUC08b Accept 5% reduction only in secondary school clerical support

- EDUC08d Provide secondary school supply teacher cover at reduced level
- EDUC08e Remove management development and training budget in secondary schools
- EDUC08f School librarians in secondary schools no longer provided
- EDUC08h Prioritise grounds maintenance work in secondary schools to manage 20% reduced resource
- EDUC08i Reduce devolved budgets for individual secondary schools as they are supplementary to central budget with prioritised expenditure
- CSS03a/b/c Increase email and electronic transactions to save more on postage, printing and stationery
- CSS01a/b/c/d/j Change in opening hours for Customer Service Points and promote alternatives to over the counter payments
- CSS01e Tiree Service Point service provided through voluntary sector contract in line with Jura and Colonsay
- CSS01f/l Increase use of emails at Customer Service Points to save money on postage, printing and stationery
- CSS01k Remove small repairs budget at Jura and Colonsay service points where requirements have been minimal
- CSS01m Change Rothesay Service Point opening hours in line with current volume, delivering service over five half-days
- CSS04b More economical replacements for broadband circuits in offices and schools to match capacity and usage
- CSS02c/d Increase use of email to avoid use of pre-paid envelopes and reduce costs
- CSS02g Develop in-house services for council tax e-billing/landlords portals in place of external contract
- CSS02h Apply landlord penalties where applicable to help council tax collection
- CSS02i Retrieve cost of administering double charge council tax from income raised
- CSS02j Align benefit advisor posts to match reduced caseload
- FS01a-c Long term redesign of catering service
- FS01d Build up and develop catering service for events and functions
- FS02a-b Long term redesign of cleaning service
- FS03f Generate water utility savings with no significant impact on current service
- FS03g Generate energy utility savings with no significant impact on current service
- FS03h Increase heating efficiency through use of biomass boilers
- FS03i Use opportunities for external providers to reduce costs of Estates service
- FS03j Prioritise use of central repairs budget for schools, libraries and social work services to manage 14.5% reduction
- FS03k Prioritise maintenance for shared offices with 8.4% central budget reduction
- FS03l Prioritise use of shared office central repairs budget with 21.6% reduced resource
- FS04b Explore external partnership working to improve use of fleet/transport resources between council teams
- FS04f Prioritise/reduce bus shelters and stops built or replaced in 2016/17 only
- GL01a1 Reduced committee/governance/elected member support including increased self service resource for members
- IHR03a Redesign staff personal safety training including online development
- IHR03b Redesign health and safety service including increased online support and prioritizing high risk service areas
- IHR01a Combine HR and Improvement/Organisational Development teams to create a single one-stop shop service, with reduced saving in 2018/19 to retain statistician post
- ED02a Phased reduction of subsidy payments to freight operators in Campbeltown to align with standard rates by 2018/19
- ED02b Increase piers and harbours berthing charges
- PRS02b Introduce charges for pre-application advice for major and locally significant planning applications, in line with other local authorities
- PRS02c Reduce planning development management team with increase in time to register planning applications
- PRS02d Remodel planning enforcement team with increase in response time to planning breach complaints
- PRS03b Provide in-house solution for aerial photography currently sourced externally
- PRS03c Introduce charges for developers/property owners for statutory street numbering in line with other local authorities.
- PRS03d Develop in-house solutions to allow removal of software/licences used for local development plan consultation
- PRS03e Increase use of online consultation for Local Development Plan
- PRS03f Provide core duties/statutory access rights of way and up to date Core Path Plan
- PRS03g Remove footpath survey software and Local Access Forum budget and use alternative ways of surveying and supporting the forum
- PRS03h Use in-house legal advice if required to resolve access disputes to allow removal of specialist legal expenses budget
- PRS03i Introduce charges for Phase 1 Habitat Surveys
- PRS03j Efficiency savings and business support costs reduced through staff reductions
- PRS03k Remodel Access Team to focus on statutory duties
- PRS03l Review Development Policy Team
- PRS04a Remove vacant Regulatory Services alternative enforcement post
- PRS04c Increase charges to businesses for inspection and certification of food export certificates in line with other local authorities

- PRS04e Achieve central administration cost savings through improved processes and systems
- PRS04f Review advice services across Argyll and Bute while maintaining a reduced allocation of funding to advice agencies (25% reduction only)
- PRS04h Increase income from private landlord registration scheme through targeted enforcement work on unregistered private landlords
- RAMS01a Increase burial charges by 20% while costs still remain below average in 9 comparative council areas
- RAMS01b Cremation charges increase limited to 14%
- RAMS01e Remove subsidies to Tobermory Harbour Association on phased basis
- RAMS01g Rose and shrub beds to be returned to grass
- RAMS01h Hedges maintained in winter only with one cut per year
- RAMS01i Grass cutting carried out once in October/November with other areas returned to meadow/natural growth
- RAMS01j Phased recovery of costs for services to Cowal Games including temporary toilets, event support, litter collection, staffing etc
- RAMS01l Reduce street sweeping frequency – half saving only accepted from original proposal of 50%
- RAMS01m Prioritise dangerous/urgent maintenance within Roads and Amenity property to manage 25% reduced resource
- RAMS01n Prioritise dangerous/urgent maintenance within depots to manage 25% reduced resource
- RAMS02c Achieve central administration cost savings by improving processes and systems and reducing training budgets
- RAMS02d Reduce central administrative support from 2017
- RAMS03a Increase car parking charges from 80p to £1, introduce to Mull car parks and introduce year round charging at other car parks
- RAMS03b Remove school crossing patrollers only in relation to lunchtime patrols and where there is already an electronic crossing in place
- RAMS03d Reduce roads operations costs by removing a vacant post and reducing budget for vehicles and plant
- RAMS04a Christmas lights funding – saving accepted in longer term only with funding from reserves for a period of three years
- RAMS04b Increase street lighting planned repairs on an area basis, reduce reactive repairs
- RAMS04c Use new lighting units which would reduce maintenance and energy costs
- RAMS04d Recover costs for event banners and other non-core council activities
- RAMS05a5 Rubbish collection – three-weekly collection with new shift pattern to make better use of fewer vehicles, retaining fortnightly recycling collections using double shift patterns
- RAMS05b Three-weekly general waste, bi-weekly co-mingled uplift by internal resource for Islay in line with other local areas
- RAMS05e Remove vacant post in Waste Management Service

Value of savings options accepted - £5.186m 2016/17 FTE impact 82