

Comments were sought from Argyll and Bute Council on four aspects of the latest Audit Scotland report; these points and the responses from Cllr Dick Walsh are below.

*1: The report refers to long-standing political and personal differences and says the council should continue to seek a resolution to these.*

No response has been made by the council on this point.

*2: The importance of area committees is stressed and an argument is made for them to be given more power - but the Services Choices paper includes an option of further centralising some area committee functions*

Cllr Walsh: "We welcome this report from Audit Scotland; we will be using all feedback, from public bodies, political colleagues, our staff and our community to inform the decisions we will take. This is why it is so important that people take part in the planning our future consultation. This is a time for everyone to work together. We as councillors need to hear the views of people right across Argyll and Bute so that we can all work together to ensure that people continue to receive the best public services that the council is capable of delivering. No decisions have been made yet; we will use the consultation responses to help us make decisions in February."

3: The report points out that the council carries out a relatively high proportion of its business in private, and makes specific reference to bidders for properties, amounts offered etc. Could you comment on that in the light of possible recent sales of property in Helensburgh and Rosneath?

*Cllr Walsh: "Over the last few months we've been looking at how other councils report information. This is part of an ongoing review to see how we might reduce the number of reports taken in private.*

*"There will inevitably be times when the disclosure of certain information would not be appropriate, but this continues to be assessed on a case by case basis."*

4: Finally there is adverse comment on the Service Choices options, saying ' it is difficult to see how the public would be able to offer an informed opinion on them'.

Cllr Walsh: "Planning our future is the overarching initiative to ensure that we deliver the key aim of our Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) and grow our economy and population.

"There are four elements to Planning Our Future – growing our economy, innovation, investing for income and service choices.

"This is an innovative approach to transformational change

"Nearly 700 people have responded online so far; a much higher response that we have had in the past.

“There are more savings options for consideration than we need to take. This is about giving people a real choice. It is really important that we get the views of the community.

“We will have to make some very difficult decisions at our budget meeting in February which is why we are asking our communities, our staff and their representatives, other agencies and political colleagues at all levels to work with us, giving us their thoughts and helping us make the best choices we can. This is a time for everyone who shares an interest in our area to stand up for it

“We would like to thank everyone who has taken time to respond, and would encourage anyone who has not yet replied to please give us their views.”