

Comhairle Coimhearsnachd Mhuile



Coinneamh na Comhairle 4mh den Am Màrt 2026 Meeting of the Council 4th March 2026

Minutes / Geàrr-chunntas

Attendees

James MacLennan
John Maughan
Billy McClymont
Norma McInnes
Sharon Worrall
Susan Ringwood

Cllr Andrew Kain

Guests

Tracy Mayo, Mull Campus Working Group
PC Kevin Bonar
Sgt Matthew Shaw
Daniel Simpson, Co-op
Richard Johnson, Co-op
Joe Reade, Mull Ferry Committee
Michelle Devlin
other members of the public on-line

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies received from Rupert Ormond, Ben Donovan, Steve Fisher, Cllr Willie Hume, Denise Baxter.

2. Declarations of interest

None to declare

3. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 4th February were approved. Proposed by SW, seconded NMcl.

4. Argyll & Bute Councillor's report

Cllr AK gave an overview of the Argyll and Bute Council's budget for 2026-27 and took questions. He acknowledged that there has been a lot of social media attention on the budget, and stressed that if anyone was aware of any instances of corruption, they should notify him. He stated it was not an easy budget to prepare. It was based on a consensus predicated on the need to protect essential services. Two versions of the budget were presented to the Council meeting, one prepared by the administration and the other by the official opposition. The budget presented by the administration was approved. The alternative proposal would have involved the use of Council reserves, and this was felt not to be a sustainable position. The budget passed by the Council includes an average spend of £3,750 per resident.

Cllr AK gave his view of the current wider political and economic situation as it affects Argyll and Bute and was clear that business growth will be essential to prevent any further decline in future

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years. He feels strongly that this would be most effectively addressed by working collaboratively at a regional level; he acknowledged that he is working to gain the full support of the Council's administration for this view. As an example, he stated that the region's roads need £100m to be spent on them in order to bring them up to standard, yet only £10m is available as a basic maintenance level in the budget.

Questions followed. In replies, Cllr AK stated that business incentives can't rely on Government, and that the Council's plan is still being developed. He was unable to identify any services or activities that had been lost because of the budget, but said that the Council were looking at opportunities for private involvement for example with the provision of public toilets.

5. Police

PC Kevin Bonar gave a report for January. There had been 47 calls in the month and 7 crimes reported. These included instances of fraud, of shoplifting, and others of assault. There were no traffic offences reported. Fraud awareness sessions are being scheduled for Pennyghael, Dervaig and Salen. Sgt Matthew Shaw stated that he is arranging for traffic police to come over to Mull as it has been some time since they were on the island. Sgt MS also gave an overview of the opportunities for Community Councils to come together to raise and address common traffic issues and pointed out that some actions will depend on the Council, Transport Scotland or BEAR to address. The recommendation to Community Councils is to work with the Area Planning Groups.

Sgt MS described that he is involved with a project which is a review of the policing model across the Southern Hebridean area. The scope of the review includes officer numbers, shift patterns, estate strategies, fleet, service delivery, response times, officer welfare, public engagement strategies, victim support and stakeholder support. It is about fact finding and having open, honest conversations with communities. A questionnaire is being developed, and it is hoped to be distributed widely. The 2030 vision is to have safer communities and a thriving workforce, and to meet the legal requirement for continuous improvement.

Discussion followed. Community Council members stated that visibility of police, connection with them and their local knowledge are high priorities. The matter of the poor condition of housing provided for police officers and the impact on their welfare was stated strongly. An associated issue was where police houses were not occupied by police, but not available to others in housing need. The matter of police officers being required to work alone and cover very wide patches was also discussed. An offer to discuss these matters with Sgt MS at a separate on-line meeting was accepted. **ACTION SW to arrange a further discussion with Sgt MS.**

6. Co-op Supermarket Tobermory

Daniel Simpson outlined the proposal for a new supermarket in Tobermory. A planning application has been submitted; residents were encouraged to view it on-line and submit any comments. DS stated that the Co-op want to connect with the community and learn what people wanted. The aim is to supply what the community needs all year around. The new store would be significantly larger at 6,400 sq ft, compared to 2,000 sq ft for the current store. The new store will hold the full range of Co-op products and will provide 20-30 new jobs. The current store will remain. Discussion and questions followed. DS confirmed that the Co-op operates one price for products across all its stores, and that the additional cost of maintaining some 'lifeline' stores such as Tobermory is spread across the whole business. He stated that there are plans to consider home deliveries, and a 'click

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and collect' type service in the future. Parcel lockers are also being considered for on-line deliveries and the opportunity to house concessions such as the Post Office or Pharmacy will be explored, although these will require a sound business case in addition to community support.

7. Gaelic

JM read a report from Mairi MacLennan of the Mull and Iona Gaelic Partnership. MM was delighted that the quiz night held in Salen as part of Gaelic week had been well attended with 45 people present and thanked everyone for their support. JM had been there and stated it was a very enjoyable evening. More events are being organised.

8. Health and Social Care

BMcC stated that no meetings have been held recently and that he is very concerned and disappointed that the long-standing proposals for Bowman Court appear to have stalled. BMcC asked Cllr AK if the funding for Bowman Court had been protected in the budget, but Cllr AK was unable to give an answer as the operational decisions are made by the Integrated Joint Board (IJB).

ACTION BMcC and Cllr AK agreed to speak outside the meeting on this matter.

Homeless shelter. Michelle Devlin presented a proposal to establish provision for homeless people in Mull. She stated that three homeless people had been seen in Mull in the last six months. She referenced a scheme in Germany where 'pods' are provided and is keen to have something similar in Mull where people can be treated with compassion and humanity. She is looking for funding for the pod/s and for land on which to site them. Discussion followed, and the importance of vulnerable people having access to the support and any interventions they need without being further stigmatised was stressed. Sgt MS stated that the police can provide a travel warrant for people to access the homeless person's shelter in Oban.

9. Planning

JM stated that the Community Council have written to object to the planning permission sought for a house on the north side of Calgary Bay. The applications submitted for February were reviewed but no objections or comments raised. BMcC stated that an application is being prepared to relocate Bayview Garage in Craignure to a site offered by the Torosay farm. The garage has outgrown its current site. SW stated that Community Councils can receive a 50% reduction on the cost of submitting a community planning application.

10. Transport

JM reminded people that Transport Scotland's Community Needs Assessment drop-in sessions on the future of islands' transport are being held and encouraged all to attend. The dates are: 24th March 15.30- 19.00 Western Isles Hotel, Tobermory and 25th March 15.30- 19.00 Pennyghael Community Hall. JM wrote to Transport Scotland to ask for sessions to be held in more villages, but Transport Scotland were unable to offer further events.

Ferries. JR gave an update on ferries.

- i) Mull has reverted to a single vessel service; it is not known how long this situation will remain. The Lochaline ferry is going to change to the MV Loch Fyne which takes longer to make a turn round and in consequence will achieve one less sailing daily. JR has successfully ensured that the current first and last sailings of the day from Lochaline will remain as at present.

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- ii) There has been an issue with ferries leaving early, which is permitted by CalMac at the captain's discretion in order to save fuel, since the vessel can then travel more slowly and still arrive 'on time'. Due to the adverse impact this can have on people relying on tight transport connections or other delays to their connecting journeys, it has been agreed that this practice should be discontinued, although details are still be confirmed.
- iii) JR had a meeting with Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Transport at Scottish Government. He is seeking commitment to the current pilot of deck space priority becoming a permanent arrangement, but this has not yet been confirmed.
- iv) A modification at Oban pier to provide shelter for passengers accessing the MV Loch Frisa via the car deck is being considered, as is as adaptation to allow passengers to get straight onto the boat without using the open car deck.
- v) The MV Isle of Lewis' time in dry dock has been extended due to the need for further repairs; this may impact the date of MV Isle of Mull's return. The report on the option to retain the MV Isle of Mull beyond its current retirement date is expected in late March.

11. Education

SW reported that the exam timetable for Scotland has been released and planning is now underway for Oban and Tobermory High Schools The exam period starts on April 22nd and continues through to 1st June.

Mull Campus Working Group. Tracy Mayo gave a report.

- i) The Judicial Review decision had been given and confirmed in law that there was never any legal obligation on Argyll and Bute Council to consult Mull residents on a new school – It had been stated at the review hearing by Argyll and Bute's counsel that consultation was considered a 'useless formality.' That conclusion differs from Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Education Ms Gilruth's letter prior to the JR in which she stated that "Scottish Government Ministers are clear that Argyll & Bute and Council have obligations to consult with the local community ahead of taking any decisions." MCWG are told that the legal case has been of "huge public interest" and is being monitored by pre-eminent human rights professionals etc.
- ii) The New Scottish Islands Plan has been published; it builds on the Human Rights Approach of the last budget.
- iii) MCWG had hosted a meeting at An Roth on the Rights of the Child. The speaker was Professor Katie Boyle. The meeting was open to all and well attended. A recording of the event can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYrS_1p0u1Y
- iv) An explainer detailing the Mull case will be available soon and a recording will also be made available. Ministers have requested updates and copies of the recording and the explainer.
- v) In the budget £7 million has been allocated for Mull but it is not stated what this is for. Cllr AK was asked for any information about this budget allocation. He replied that he understood it was a contingency item for use if a refurbishment of the current Tobermory school was needed. A refurbishment undertaken using LEIP funding must meet the same standards as a new build. The Council costed a refurbishment at £29m plus, an amount which is not far off the costs of a new build.
- vi) MCWG have secured a meeting with Ms Gilruth the Cabinet Secretary for Education to discuss a flexible localised plan. Wherever the New Campus is located it is important that the best possible school is provided for Mull.

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- vii) There will be a community meeting at Creich Hall on Saturday 7th March at 3.30pm to discuss the situation and all are invited. The Campaign continues.

12. Digital Switchover

There were no further details to report. JM completed the Scottish Islands Federation survey on digital resilience.

13. Community Survey

The survey is now closed. JM gave a summary of the survey's key findings. The survey yielded 230 replies - 8.4% of the population aged 15+. Housing was the top issue - raised by 40 % of respondents. The environment and healthcare shared second place at 13% each. Headline themes from each topic have been identified and will help inform the discussion at drop-in sessions, details of which will be advertised soon.

14. Emergency Planning

Plans are progressing with the establishment of Warm Centres, but more volunteers are needed and would be very welcome to join any of the Warm Centre groups. Dervaig has agreed to use the catchment area of the primary school as their boundary for their service provision. They have researched information about generators and are now seeking funding. A relationship is being established with SSE distribution, and funding may be available from them. They are very keen to share any findings with other groups, and to learn from them too. Pennyghael Community Centre has very few volunteers and is focussing on other priorities at present.

15. Elections

The dates for Community Council elections later this summer have been published. New members are sought, and anyone interested is encouraged to contact any current member of the Community Council for an informal chat. **ACTION SW to place on social media.**

16. Action register

ACTION SW will circulate the latest version and prompt members for their updates

17. Any other business or matter arising

- i) BMCC reported that he had submitted the requested letter concerning the proposed bus shelter at Bowman Court/Craignure Surgery.
- ii) Details were shared of the My Place Awards and the BBC Awards. **ACTION SW will publish details of the of the My Place Awards and BBC Awards on social media.**
- iii) SR stated that she had received reports of mail being delayed at the Glasgow depot and invited anyone who had experienced an issue to please contact her.
- iv) JM had attended the Cross-Party Group on Islands on the topic of critical themes for islanders in the next session of the Scottish Parliament. He raised the view that Community Councils should have ready access to Cabinet Secretaries, though this has rarely been the case.
- v) **It was agreed the Community Council join the Scottish Islands Federation. ACTION SW.**
- vi) BMCC reported that work has been completed on widening the Fishnish ferry access road.

18. Public questions

None were raised

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19. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be Wednesday 1st April at 7pm in person at An Roth and online. All are welcome to attend by either means.

Mull Community Council Members

John	Maughan	Convenor	jrmaughan@btinternet.com convenor@mull-community-council.co.uk	07810 093426
James	MacLennan	Deputy-Convenor	jmaclellan@gmx.co.uk	07584 579502
Rupert	Ormond	Secretary	rupert.ormond.mullcc@gmail.com secretary@mull-community-council.co.uk	01680 300073
Sharon	Worrall	Treasurer	sworrall.minutes@btinternet.com treasurer@mull-community-council.co.uk	01688 400562
Ben	Donovan		ben-donovan@outlook.com	
Steve	Fisher		dunkeldsteve@gmail.com	07931 119367
Norma	MacInnes		norma.macinnes@googlemail.com	07522 531043
Billy	McClymont		mullfuneralservices@yahoo.co.uk	01680 812435
Susan	Ringwood		sringwood@me.com	07703 753862