

County Buildings
Wellington Square
AYR KA7 1DR
Tel. No. 01292 612169

11 January 2024

Dear Councillor

SOUTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL (SPECIAL)

You are requested to participate in a special meeting of South Ayrshire Council to be held **on Wednesday 17 January 2024 at 10.00 a.m.** for the purpose of considering the undernoted business.

This meeting will be held in the County Hall, County Buildings, Ayr on a hybrid basis for Elected Members, will be live-streamed and available to view at <https://south-ayrshire.public-i.tv/>

Yours sincerely

CATRIONA CAVES
Head of Legal and Regulatory Services

B U S I N E S S

1. Provost.
2. Sederunt and Declarations of Interest.
3. Remit from Council Meeting of 7 December 2023:-

In accordance with the Scheme of Delegation and Standing Orders for Meetings, the recommendations in the minutes as contained in the 'C' paragraph have been referred to the Council for decision – Minutes of Cabinet of 28 November 2023 – “Communications Strategy 2023-28 and Communications Team Staffing Proposals” (copy of report and minute excerpt herewith).

4. Setting of Council House Rents and Other Rents and Charges (2024/25 – 2026/27) and Proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue Budget 2024/25 and Capital Budget (2024/25 - 2028/29) – Submit joint report by Assistant Director – Housing and Operations and Head of Finance, ICT and Procurement (copy herewith).
5. Notice of Motion
 - (a) Moved by Councillor Laura Brennan-Whitefield, seconded by Councillor Cameron Ramsay:-

“As tensions rise in the Middle East and the onslaught of bombings continues in Gaza and elsewhere across the region, Council requests that the Chief Executive of South Ayrshire Council write to the UK government and request that they call for a ceasefire to help prevent continued loss of life of both Palestinian and Israeli civilians and allow for the provision of a humanitarian corridor to permit movement of the displaced and continued distribution of essential supplies of food and critical lifesaving medication.

Over the past few months, we have seen hundreds of thousands of people take to the UK streets calling for a ceasefire in the region, a display of solidarity that has not been seen in over 20 years. The public clearly support an immediate ceasefire, as with each day that passes the death toll continues to spiral out of control. By supporting our motion and requesting a ceasefire, the proposer and seconder are not asking that you take a side on the conflict, but simply asking that Council support the call to address the on-going humanitarian crisis and reduce the needless loss of innocent life on both sides.

We stress, this is not a call to support the Israeli military or the Hamas organisation, it is a call to support families - Mothers, Fathers, Children and Grandparents. No conflict has been resolved in a humane way with reckless bombings and killing of innocent people.”

6. Formal Questions

For more information on any of the items on this agenda, please telephone Janice McClure, Committee Services on at 01292 612169, at Wellington Square, Ayr or e-mail: janice.mcclure@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk

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**EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF
THE CABINET
OF 28 NOVEMBER 2023**

Corporate and Strategic/Finance, HR and ICT.

C

Communications Strategy 2023-28 and Communications Team Staffing Proposals

There was submitted a report (issued) of 22 November 2023 by the Director of Strategic Change and Communities seeking approval for the Communications Strategy 2023-28; the Communications Team staffing required to deliver the service and the strategy; and approval for revised guidance on Managing Work Related Social Media and Media Relations.

The Cabinet

Decided:

- (1) to approve the Communications Strategy 2023-28 as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report;
- (2) to approve the conversion of two temporary Communications Assistant posts to permanent posts to support the delivery of this strategy and to ensure the continued delivery of the service;
- (3) to approve the Managing Work Related Social Media Guidance for Employees, as detailed in Appendix 4 of the report;
- (4) to approve the Media Relations Guidance, as detailed in Appendix 5 of the report; and
- (5) to agree that officers conduct a Review of the activities undertaken by the Communication Team and the evaluation of them, engage with Members and report back to Cabinet with the results of this Review within six months.

South Ayrshire Council

Report by Director of Strategic Change and Communities to Cabinet of 28 November 2023

**Subject: Communications Strategy 2023-28 and
 Communications Team Staffing Proposals**

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for: the Communications Strategy 2023-28; the Communications Team staffing required to deliver the service and the strategy; and for approval for revised guidance on Managing Work Related Social Media and Media Relations.

2. Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1.1 considers and approves the Communications Strategy 2023-28 (Appendix 1);**
- 2.1.2 approves the conversion of 2 temporary Communications Assistant posts to permanent posts to support the delivery of this strategy and to ensure the continued delivery of the service;**
- 2.1.3 approves the Managing Work Related Social Media Guidance for Employees (Appendix 4); and**
- 2.1.4 approves the Media Relations Guidance (Appendix 5).**

3. Background

- 3.1 The Communications Strategy 2023-2028 has been developed to align with the Council Plan 2023-2028. The strategy, which can be viewed at Appendix 1, is underpinned by the Council Plan and proposes 3 key strategic goals:

- 1) Grow our audience;
- 2) Promote South Ayrshire as a destination of choice;
- 3) Align communications to the service planning process to widely promote the delivery of the Council Plan.

- 3.2 The strategy builds on the significant improvements made to communications output since the Communications team transferred to Organisational Development and Customer Services in 2019. Key improvements include:

- Social Media - The introduction of a range of corporate social media channels, providing engaging and informative public messaging and building over 58,000 followers;
- Campaigns -The introduction of a standardised, professional approach to campaigns, with over 200 campaigns designed, developed and delivered from 1 January – 30 September 2023. This includes a campaign to promote and cover the airshow which generated a reach of 1,771,539 on social media and webpages during the course of the event itself;
- An increase in digital, radio and TV coverage, with the service designing and launching the Council's first Sky/ Virgin TV; You Tube and in app adverts;
- The introduction and content management of an employee Yammer Channel to provide more engaging communications and information to employees;
- The introduction of a corporate approach to design and branding and an increase in in-house design and animated video production. As at 30 September 2023, this had saved the council £99,535 in cost avoidance since 1 January 2023 (the cost to outsource this work).

3.3 More details on the activities carried out by the Communications team can be found at Appendix 2.

3.4 The current substantive Communications team comprises 4 FTE - 1 Co-ordinator, 2 Communications Officers and 1 Design Officer.

3.5 The substantive structure is not adequate to deliver the volume, range and quality of communications provided currently and in recent years. This has only been made possible as additional temporary resource has been funded/ provided in a range of ways taking the team to 7 FTE in 2021/22 and 2022/23 as detailed at Appendix 3. Key to this additional resource has been the creation of temporary Communications Assistant posts, two of which were funded for 23 months from central support additional resource requirements agreed by Leadership Panel of 26 October 2021. Following the departure of one of the assistant postholders who was funded from this central support funding, ELT agreed to use the balance of funding for this post to extend the contract of the remaining central support funded assistant. Currently the team has 2 temporary assistants – one funded by remaining central support funding and the other from a temporarily vacant post in OD. At its meeting of 29 August 2023, Cabinet requested that a review of Communication support requirements be presented to them prior to making any decision on whether to retain these two Communications Assistant posts permanently.

3.6 As detailed at Appendix 2, the Communications Assistant posts are crucial to the effective running of the Communications team and to the continued delivery of the service. If temporary assistant posts are not funded beyond 2024, output will reduce by 70 hours per week, meaning a significant reduction in the number of communications campaigns produced; limited social media; a significant reduction in corporate social media channels; limited use of YouTube, video or animation; minimal if any social media monitoring; live events coverage reduced and restricted to the Air Show and a requirement for services to outsource a volume of design work.

- 3.7 In addition to the above temporary arrangements, support has also been provided by an officer from the Economy and Regeneration Team. This support has been critical to delivering communications campaigns and activities including press releases, press enquiries, speechwriting, events coverage and promotion including the airshow.
- 3.8 Without staffing the service adequately, neither the current volume of output, nor the strategic goals set out in the Communications Strategy will be achievable.
- 3.9 A benchmarking exercise with other, neighbouring Council Communications teams identified that our substantive structure of 4 communications posts is significantly below the average number of 9 officers.
- 3.10 **Managing Work Related Social Media Guidance for Employees**
- 3.10.1 The Communications team manages corporate social media channels with significant numbers of followers. A small number of services manage their own social media channels, targeted at specific groups e.g. school social media accounts. Managing Work Related Social Media Guidance for Employees has been developed to support employees who use social media in the course of their job. This guidance can be found at Appendix 4.
- 3.11 **Media Relations Guidance**
- 3.11.1 Media Relations Guidance has been developed for employees and Elected Members to ensure that any contact with the media helps enhance and protect the reputation of the Council. This guidance can be found at Appendix 5.

4. Proposals

- 4.1 It is proposed that 2 temporary Communications Assistant posts are converted to permanent posts, to support the delivery of this strategy and to ensure the continued delivery of the service. These will be funded from future staffing budgets when temporary funding arrangements detailed at 3.5 have been exhausted.

5. Legal and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 The Guidance issued in paragraphs 3.10.1 and 3.11.1 satisfies the requirements of the Local Authority Publicity Code of Practice and the provisions of section 4 of the Local Government Act 1986, as amended by section 27 of the Local Government Act 1988.
- 5.2 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The recommended option would cost £84,163.38 annually funded as per the below.

Post	2023/24	2024/25
Comms Assistant 1	Funded for 12 months from vacant OD post until September 2024 and as per Appendix 3.	To be included in future staffing budget from September 2024
Comms Assistant 2	Funded as per ELT agreement 482-SCC-OD and Comms.doc from balance of central support funding until November 2024, as detailed at 3.5 and as per Appendix 3.	To be included in future staffing budget from November 2024

7. Human Resources Implications

7.1 Assistant Communications Officer posts have been on the structure temporarily for 2 years and have been job evaluated at Level 7.

8. Risk

8.1 *Risk Implications of Adopting the Recommendations*

8.1.1 There are no risks associated with adopting the recommendations.

8.2 *Risk Implications of Rejecting the Recommendations*

8.2.1 The risks associated with rejecting the recommendations are: that we will not be able to continue to deliver the activities provided by the Communications team beyond autumn 2024 when temporary Communications Assistant posts cease to be funded and that we will be unable to provide the volume and range of communications activity required to meet the council's ambitions. If temporary Assistant posts are not funded beyond 2024, output will reduce by 70 hours per week, meaning a significant reduction in the number of communications campaigns produced; limited social media; a significant reduction in social media channels; limited use of YouTube, video or animation; minimal if any social media monitoring; events coverage reduced and restricted to the Air Show and a requirement for services to outsource a volume of design work.

9. Equalities

9.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA), **(including the Fairer Scotland Duty in respect of any Strategic decision)**, has been carried out on the proposal contained in this report, which identifies potential positive and negative equality impacts and any required mitigating actions. The EQIA is attached as Appendix 6.

10. Sustainable Development Implications

10.1 ***Considering Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)*** - This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme or strategy or document otherwise described which could be considered to constitute a plan, programme, policy or strategy.

11. Options Appraisal

11.1 An options appraisal has not been carried out in relation to the subject matter of this report.

12. Link to Council Plan

12.1 Communications is an enabling service and the matters referred to in this report contribute to all priorities of the Council Plan.

13. Results of Consultation

13.1 There has been public consultation on communications via a survey. Feedback from this survey can be found within the Communications Strategy at Appendix 1.

13.2 Consultation has taken place with Councillor Martin Dowey, Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Strategic, and Councillor Ian Davis, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Human Resources and ICT, and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

13.3 Consultation has taken place with Trade Unions and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

13.4 Consultation has taken place with staff and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

14. Next Steps for Decision Tracking Purposes

14.1 If the recommendations above are approved by Members, the Director of Strategic Change and Communities will ensure that all necessary steps are taken to ensure full implementation of the decision within the following timescales, with the completion status reported to the Cabinet in the 'Council and Cabinet Decision Log' at each of its meetings until such time as the decision is fully implemented:

Implementation	Due date	Managed by
Implement new staffing arrangements – advertise, recruit and appoint to permanent Communications Assistant posts	31 December 2023	Service Lead - Organisational Development and Customer Services
Launch Communications Strategy	31 December 2023	Service Lead - Organisational Development and Customer Services
Launch Managing Work Related Social Media Guidance for Employees	31 December 2023	Service Lead - Organisational Development and Customer Services

Implementation	Due date	Managed by
Launch Media Relations Guidance	31 December 2023	Service Lead - Organisational Development and Customer Services

Background Papers **Report to Cabinet of 29 August 2023 – [Corporate Support Services Capacity Issues – Update](#)**

Person to Contact **Gillian Farrell, Service Lead - Organisational Development and Customer Services**
County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr, KA7 1DR
Phone 01292 612712
E-mail gillian.farrell@south-ayrshire.gov.uk

Date: 22 November 2023

Communications Strategy

2023-28





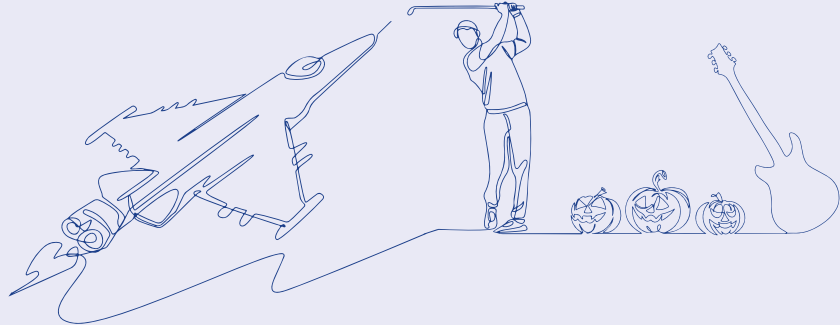
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS
IS KEY TO THE DAY TO
DAY RUNNING OF
THE COUNCIL



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Foreword from Councillor Martin Dowey Leader of South Ayrshire Council



We are ambitious for South Ayrshire and our [Council Plan 2023-28](#) is based on priorities and outcomes that we believe will have the greatest impact on the wellbeing of our communities, our local economy and our environment. This Communications Strategy sets out how we will make sure people know what we are doing to deliver on our Council Plan priorities and outcomes, how they can get involved, and the difference that we are making.

It goes without saying that we want to make sure people in South Ayrshire are kept up to date on Council news, especially where issues may directly affect them. However, our communications are not just about the day to day running of services - we want residents to feel a civic and community pride in South Ayrshire. Therefore, our communications to local people must highlight the work we are doing to improve local spaces and places and to make South Ayrshire an attractive place to live, work and learn.

We know South Ayrshire is a fantastic destination and are determined to put it on the map – promoting everything this great area has to offer, not just for visitors, but for

people who might choose South Ayrshire as a place to live, visit, work and invest in. Our Communications Strategy therefore has a key focus on selling South Ayrshire as a destination of choice, publicising the wide range of attractions the area has to offer and the events we sponsor, from international events such as The International Ayr Show- Festival of Flight and The 152nd Open at Royal Troon, to local events such as TamFest, the Holy Fair, Carrick Lowland Gathering and Prestfest.

As one of the biggest employers in the area, we want our staff to be ambassadors for South Ayrshire. That means they need to be engaged and up to date with what's happening across Council services, that their successes are celebrated, and they have all the information they need to do their job.

This strategy builds on the significant progress we have made as an organisation to improve our communications, reach and engage with more people and be first to tell our news. I'm proud of what we have achieved so far and confident that we'll see even more progress over the next five years.

Councillor Martin Dowey
Leader of South Ayrshire Council

The Council Plan

In April 2023 we published our [Council Plan 2023 – 2028](#). This plan sets out our goals and objectives for the next five years and is set against three key priorities:

Priority One Spaces and Places



Priority Two Live, Work, Learn



Priority Three Civic and Community Pride



Key Principles

Getting our communications right is key to the day to day running and effectiveness of the Council.

We want our residents, communities, employees, partners, and stakeholders to know:

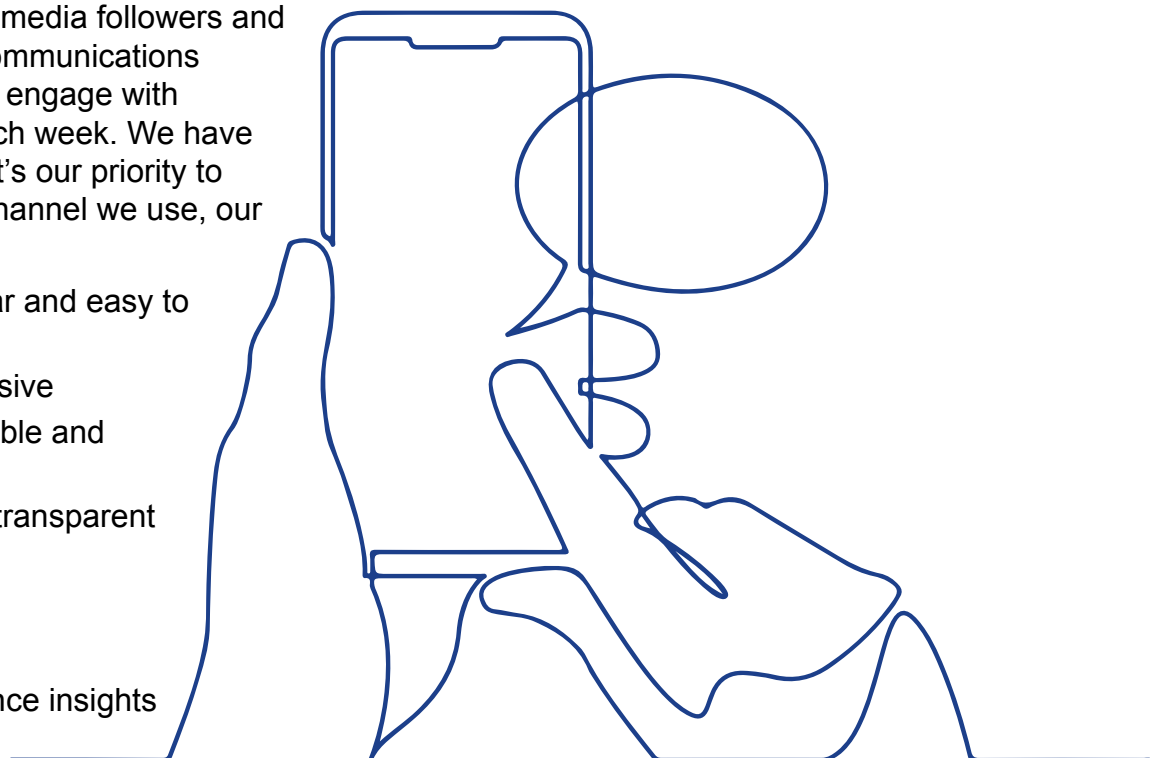
- Who we are – our purpose, vision and values
- What we do – our services, statutory obligations, ambitions and priorities
- How we are delivering for the people of South Ayrshire in line with our Council Plan
- Where and how to access, or engage with our services or the Council
- How we make a difference to our residents and communities
- Why we do what we do and why we are making any changes to the way we work
- When we propose to make changes or decisions that affect people and how they can get involved
- Where our budget comes from and how we use it to fund services and improve local communities
- What South Ayrshire has to offer for local people and visitors and for those who choose to live, work and learn here.



Our Communication Standards

With over 59,000 social media followers and a range of non-digital communications channels, we reach and engage with thousands of people each week. We have a diverse audience, so it's our priority to ensure that, whatever channel we use, our communications are:

- In Plain English, clear and easy to understand
- Accessible and inclusive
- Two-way, approachable and engaging
- Clear, accurate and transparent
- Regular and reliable
- Up to date
- Consistent in style
- Evidence and audience insights based.



Roles and Responsibilities

We are all responsible for the profile and reputation of the Council and all have a part to play in the effective delivery of this strategy.

Elected Members, the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), Service Leads, employees and partners all have a role to ensure we enhance the profile and reputation of the Council, and South Ayrshire as a whole. How we communicate and engage with residents, customers, stakeholders, colleagues and partners plays a key part in this:

Directors/Assistant Directors

Directors and Assistant Directors should ensure that services within their area of responsibility take a strategic approach to communications, aligning these to the service planning process.

Service Leads

Service Leads must:

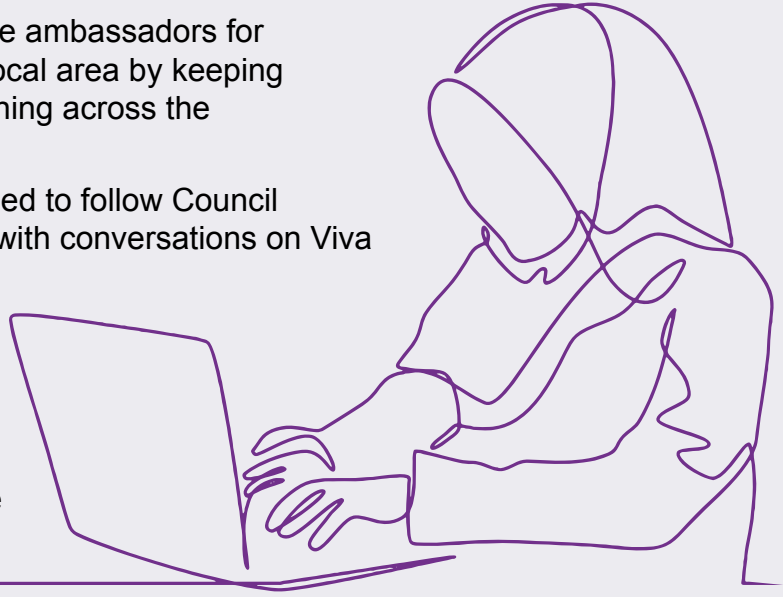
- Take a strategic approach to communications about their services, identifying high level communications messages, plans and campaigns on a yearly basis, in line with the service planning process.
- In conjunction with service communications campaigns, provide regular information for the public, staff and Elected Members about the work of their teams, share their good news stories and provide timely information about projects, service delivery or changes.
- Work with the Communications team to ensure that communications campaigns about their service are effectively implemented and evaluated.
- In conjunction with Digital Services, maintain their service's web pages and ensure the content is accurate, up to date and engaging.
- Manage any niche social media accounts administered by their service effectively and in line with agreed media and social media protocols.
- Ensure all written communications issued by their service are clear, written in Plain English and jargon-free e.g. letters/emails to customers.
- Ensure employees in their teams have access to information about what's happening in their team, service and across the Council.



Employees

Employees are encouraged to be effective ambassadors for their team, service, the Council and the local area by keeping themselves up to date with what's happening across the organisation.

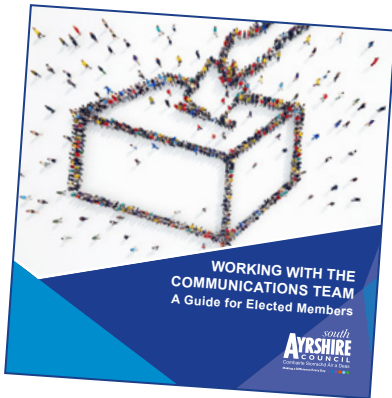
- Employees who can, are encouraged to follow Council updates, and interact and engage with conversations on Viva Engage (SAC Staff Community Hub Yammer page).
- Follow the Council on social media where they can.
- Engage with opportunities to hear about what's happening across the Council.



Elected Members

Elected Members are encouraged to make use of the internal and external communication channels available to them. These include the Elected Member Weekly Information Note; Viva Engage (Yammer); The Core; Elected Member Briefings; and the Council's corporate social media channels.

Members are also encouraged to actively share the Council's messages with their constituents as appropriate.



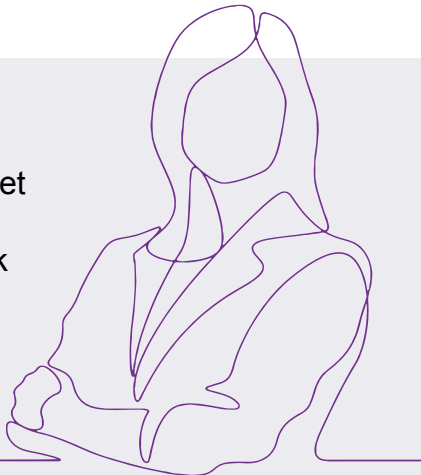
Reading Materials

Members are advised to familiarise themselves with the guidance on communications in [The Councillors' Code of Conduct and Guidance](#) and the requirements of [Local authority publicity: code of practice - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

[Working with the Communications Team – A Guide for Elected Members](#) is available for Members to view on the Communications page of the Council's intranet, The Core.

Portfolio Holders

Councillors who hold a Cabinet Portfolio are encouraged to support the promotion of work undertaken by the services within their portfolio area.



Role of the Communications Team

The Communications team will support the delivery of this strategy. The team provides a professional communications, design and media relations service. They:

- Develop, maintain and grow our network of corporate social media channels, monitoring feedback and engagement.
- Support services in the development of communications plans and in developing and promoting engaging content.
- Manage media relations.
- Provide a professional media handling and liaison service.



- Provide a professional in-house design service.
- Coordinate advertising on behalf of services, including developing copy, proofreading and design work.
- Create in-house videos, including scripting, building, editing and voiceover.
- Create and coordinate YouTube, In App and TV advertising, including in-house scripting, voiceover and creation of video/digital adverts and liaising with relevant media organisations.
- Produce quarterly Council magazine and coordinate distribution to a non-digital audience.
- Manage internal communications channels including Viva Engage (Yammer); Elected Member Information Notes and Chief Executive communications.
- Carry out evaluation and analysis including audience insights and campaign evaluations.

Key Achievements

This strategy builds on the work undertaken between 2020-23 to take an audience focused approach to our communications, increasing the number of people we communicate with, the ways in which we reach them and the quality and diversity of our content.

We reached more people than ever before

We:

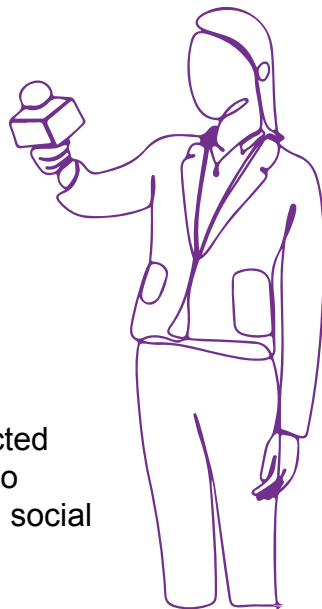
- Significantly increased our social media presence and audience
- Grew our social media followers from 19,148 to 59,804
- Built an average monthly social media engagement of 22,591
- Expanded the number of social media platforms we post on and now regularly use – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, NextDoor and YouTube
- Expanded our non-digital reach by distributing South Ayrshire Council magazines via a range of channels including local supermarkets, libraries and via Care at Home and Sheltered Housing teams and Voluntary Action South Ayrshire (VASA).



We improved internal and employee communications

We:

- Improved the way we communicate with staff and Elected Members with the introduction of Yammer.
- Modernised Chief Executive employee communications and Elected Member Information Notes.
- Enhanced our communications approach by securing professional media training sessions for Elected Members and Chief Officers, and industry expert social media training for Elected Members and staff who operate services' local social media accounts.



We put design at the forefront of communications



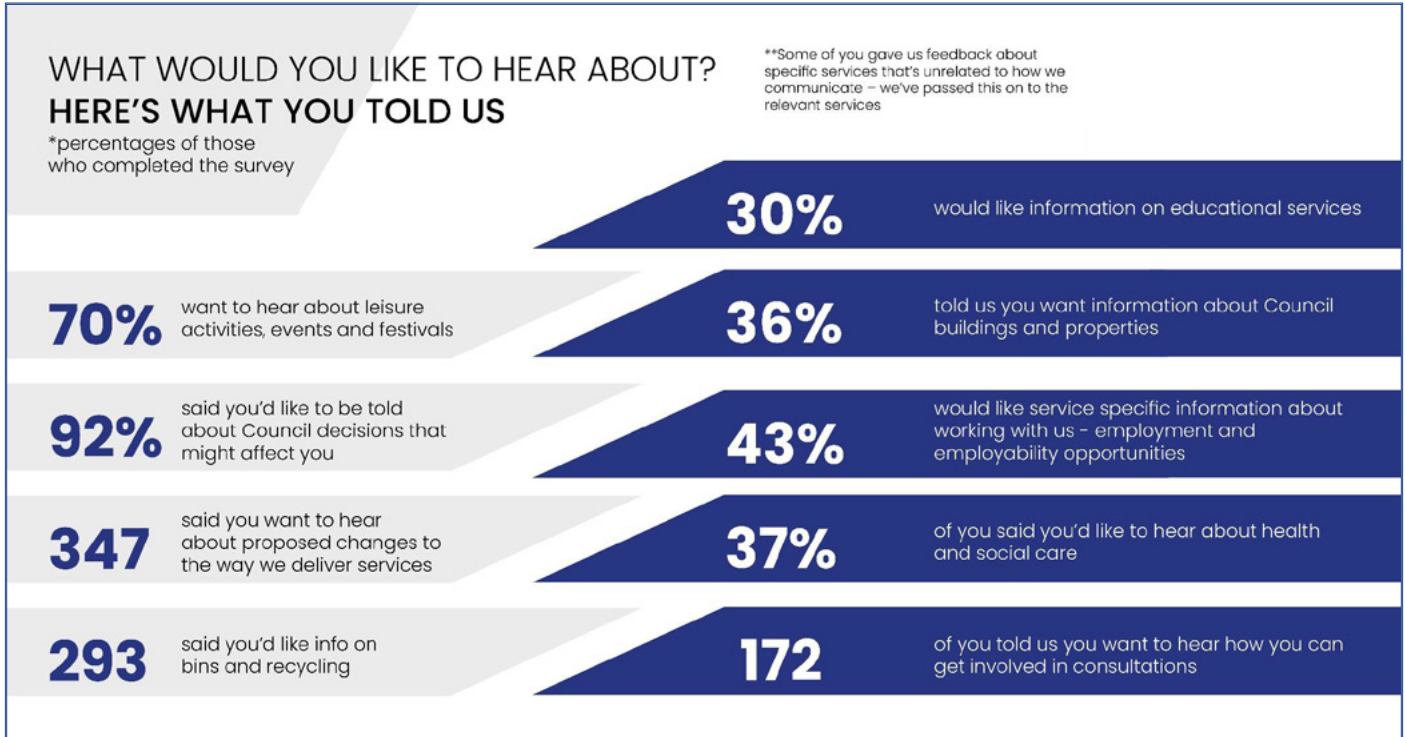
We:

- Streamlined and refreshed corporate branding to better showcase the work we do.
- Significantly increased our digital provision, including video and animation to ensure our communications are engaging.
- Produced and prominently displayed vinyl artwork in key public locations to highlight initiatives, projects and news.

Going Forward

In developing this strategy, we took into account audience insights and analytics on our digital channels, campaign evaluations, and feedback and engagement from customers, services and staff.

Customers said:



Our Strategic Goals

Strategic Goal 1 – Grow our audience



We have made great strides in building our audience and want to reach even more people going forward.

Social media helps us get our news out, often in real time, to thousands of people every week

The social and digital media landscape is constantly changing. Therefore, it is important that the quality and relevance of our social media engages people, and sustains and builds on the significant progress we have made to grow our digital audience to **over 59,000 followers**

While digital media is a priority in growing our reach and public engagement, we are also committed to reaching people who don't use social media.

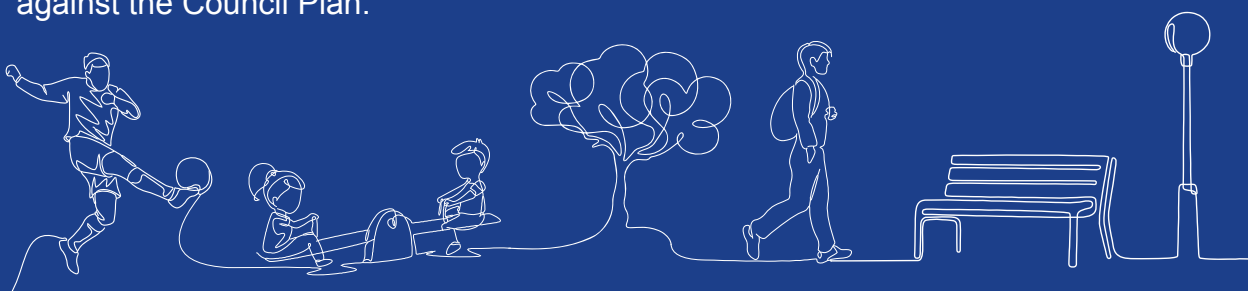
Strategic Goal 2 – Promote South Ayrshire as a destination of choice

Communications which showcase South Ayrshire and promote the area to residents and visitors are a key strategic priority. We will have a real focus on highlighting local events, activities and attractions which foster a sense of civic and community pride, and which help to attract people to the area.



Strategic Goal 3 – Align communications to the service planning process to widely promote the delivery of the Council Plan.

Services play a key role in making sure they are engaging and communicating effectively with the public, sharing news, celebrating successes and highlighting how they are delivering against the Council Plan.



Corporate Action Plan – Delivering this strategy

Strategic Goal 1 - Grow our audience

PRIORITY/AIM 1	ACTION	LEAD SERVICE(S)	ENABLING SERVICE(S)
Grow our digital / social media audience across a range of platforms	Increase followers by 10% across corporate social media and digital communication channels.	Communications	Service Leads
	Increase employee engagement on Viva Engage (Yammer).	Communications	Service Leads
	Niche social media account owners to carry out local social media analytics, ensuring effective and engaging use of channels.	Niche social media channel owners	Communications
	Services to review corporate and service web pages to ensure they are up to date; informative and engaging/easy to navigate.	Service Leads	Digital Services
Further develop the use of public facing TVs to reach residents who have limited, or no digital access	Ensure a minimum of 15 different slides showing current Council information and news are displayed at any one time on public facing TVs.	Communications	Services

Strategic Goal 2 - Promote South Ayrshire as a Destination of Choice

PRIORITY / AIM 2	ACTION	LEAD SERVICE(S)	ENABLING SERVICE(S)
Promote South Ayrshire as a destination of choice	Develop a high-level communications calendar outlining planned coverage of Council sponsored local events.	DSA	Communications
	Expand the use of communication and marketing tools such as in-App and TV advertising to promote South Ayrshire to a wide audience.	Communications	DSA

Strategic Goal 3 - Align communications to the service planning process to widely promote the delivery of the Council Plan.

PRIORITY / AIM 3	ACTION	LEAD SERVICE(S)	ENABLING SERVICE(S)
Align communications to the service planning process to widely promote the delivery of the Council Plan.	Communications calendars/ plans are in place for campaigns identified by services that promote their contribution to the Council Plan.	Service Leads	Communications

Appendix 2 - Communications Staffing Proposals– Key Communications Activities

Table 1 below provides a summary of activity carried out by the Communications team by role/ responsibility. The table also highlights where activity has been introduced to the Communications team since the service transferred to OD and Customer Services and provides high level detail of work carried out by officers and assistants.

Table 1

	Communications Activities	Co-ordinator	Officer	Design Officer	Assistant	New
Media	Write and issue press releases – (160 releases issued between 1 March and 30 September 2023)	✓	✓			
	Managing Media Enquiries. This includes liaising with a range of services to obtain information to allow us to prepare suggested responses (an average of 11 media enquiries each week).	✓	✓			
	Press Calls – liaise with services and media outlets to arrange press calls at a range of locations to promote the work and enhance the reputation of the Council.	✓	✓			
	Radio advertising – script, write and develop adverts including providing voice-overs (VO) for use on local radio.	✓	✓	✓	✓	VO provision new.
	Press advertising – Manage council's advertising contract and work with services to develop and design a range of advertising for print press.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Develop targeted TV, YouTube and In App advertising. Communications Team create, design and provide voiceover, liaising with relevant media organisations to broadcast adverts.	✓	✓	✓	✓	New
Campaigns	Design, develop and deliver targeted multi-media campaigns to support services to promote initiatives, inform the public and raise the profile and reputation of the council. (101 campaigns delivered or ongoing in 2023 as at October 2023)	✓	✓	✓	✓	New
	Apply and advise services on recognised model (O.A.S.I.S.) for planning campaigns.	✓	✓			New
	Carry out comprehensive campaign evaluations, including data analysis; social media analytics and media monitoring.	✓	✓		✓	New

Social Media Channels and Output	Facebook - Manage corporate Facebook channel, creating engaging content and building reach, followers and engagement. (The team has grown this channel from 0 followers since its introduction in 2019 to over 14,500 as at October 2023)	✓	✓		✓	New
	Twitter – Manage corporate Twitter channel, creating engaging content and building reach, followers and engagement. (The team has grown this channel from 15,581 followers since in 2019 to 19,704 as at October 2023)	✓	✓		✓	Significant increase in output, reach and followers
	LinkedIn – Manage corporate LinkedIn channel creating engaging content and building reach, followers and engagement (Comms team began management of the corporate LinkedIn account in April 2021). The team has grown this channel from 4096 followers since in 2021 to 5872 as at October 2023	✓	✓		✓	New
	Instagram – Manage corporate Instagram channel, creating engaging content and building reach, followers and engagement with followers at 1148 as at October 2023.	✓	✓		✓	New
	NextDoor – Manage corporate NextDoor channel, creating engaging content and building reach, followers and engagement. (The team introduced and grew this channel to 17,404 members as at October 2023.)	✓	✓		✓	New
Social Media Monitoring	Significant increase in reach, engagement and followers (total followers on corporate channels = 59,804, which requires daily, ongoing monitoring of comments and feedback across all corporate social media channels). Liaise with services to provide responses to comments where appropriate Provide information to services on social media monitoring regarding their service.	✓	✓		✓	
	Analyse and provide reports on social media data and analytics to support campaign evaluation and continuous growth and improvement of each social media platform.	✓	✓		✓	
Digital	Script, develop and design targeted videos to support campaigns and initiatives.	✓	✓	✓	✓	New

Employee Communications	Create and write Chief Executive's monthly update and South Ayrshire Weekly.	✓	✓		✓	Increase from monthly to weekly
	Yammer –Manage content, feedback and comments received on employee Yammer Channel. Create engaging content and evaluate to continuously increase engagement	✓	✓		✓	
Elected Members	Provide a speechwriting service for the Provost and Depute Provost. Work includes researching a wide range of topics to draft speeches for a variety of civic events.	✓	✓		✓	
	Produce weekly Elected Member Information Note.	✓	✓		✓	
Design	Provide a free, high volume, professional design service for all council services, including design for reports, documents, signage, merchandise and digital communications. (Total design jobs produced 1 January – 12 October 2023 = 140, with a saving to the council of £99,535.)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Develop and provide advice on corporate branding guidance.					
Events	Provide live coverage of pre-agreed corporate events e.g. the Air Show.	✓	✓		✓	New
South Ayrshire Quarterly Magazine	Write, design and co-ordinate the distribution of free quarterly South Ayrshire Council magazine to over 4,000 residents.	✓	✓	✓	✓	New
School Media Team	Coordinate and manage school media team to provide communications related work experience for S3-S6 pupils using a range of communications tools.	✓			✓	New
Civil Contingencies out of hours	Provide communications support in relation to civil contingencies as agreed by relevant Gold/Silver Command.	✓	✓			
Public Space TVs	Manage and create content for public facing TVs in each of the five main towns to promote the work of the council, including events and to inform the public.	✓	✓	✓	✓	New

Cabinet – Communications Strategy and Staffing Proposals

Appendix 3 – Communications Team Structure

<p>Substantive Structure (4 FTE)</p>	<p>1 x Coordinator 1 x Design Officer 2 x Communications Officer</p>
<p>Temporary Additional Posts - 21/22 (additional 3 FTE)</p>	<p>3 x Communications Assistants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 funded from temporarily vacant OD post and; • 2 funded for 23 months from central support additional resource requirements agreed by Leadership Panel of 26 October 2021.
<p>Temporary Additional Posts - 22/23 (additional 2FTE)</p>	<p>2 x Communications Assistants</p> <p>Temporary funding for these was agreed by ELT on 30 June 2023 as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 funded from a temporarily vacant OD post for 12 months (substantive postholder seconded to Ukraine Support Team); • 1 from balance of remaining central support funding agreed by Leadership Panel of 26 October 2021 (£29,356). One postholder who had been funded through this arrangement left and ELT agreed to use the balance of funds to extend the remaining assistant (ref: 1083260) funded from this budget from 1 March 2024 until the funding is exhausted (November 2024).

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Appendix 4



Managing Work-related
Social Media
Guidance for Employees

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TO INFORM AND ENGAGE
WITH THE PUBLIC
TO PROMOTE
THE WORK OF
THE COUNCIL

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Introduction

Social media plays a key role in the way we communicate. We use corporate social media channels to raise the Council's profile, inform and engage with the public, and promote the work we do in line with our purpose, vision and values, and our [Council Plan 2023-28](#).

We want to:

- Continue to grow our social media audience and streamline the number of corporate social media accounts we operate to maximise reach and followers;
- Use social media to engage with a wider, more diverse audience;
- Ensure our social media content is engaging and informative;
- Use social media as a key tool to communicate Council news and give immediate updates on situations as they change;
- Use social media to make it easier for residents and staff to ask questions and give us their feedback, ideas and suggestions;
- Make sure social media guidance is available to Elected Members, managers and employees.

The Council's Communications team manages corporate social media accounts, however this guidance is aimed at those employees who manage or administer service related niche social media accounts.

This guidance supports employees to use social media effectively for work purposes, in line with the Council's [Code of Conduct](#).

This document does not cover personal use of social media. Employees should refer to the Council's Code of Conduct for guidance on the use of personal social media accounts.



About the Council's social media channels

Corporate Social Media

The Communications team operates the Council's main social media platforms:

[Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [YouTube](#) and [Nextdoor](#)

These channels support the Council and services to get information out to our 59,000+ followers.

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Local accounts

A number of services administer their own local accounts. These can be beneficial where there is a targeted audience e.g. of school pupils, parents, leisure members, and day care residents.

It's important that there is a clear purpose for a local account and that it is administered and monitored regularly. Where services would like to establish a local account, they should complete the [social media request form](#) on The Core in the first instance. A member of the Communications team will be in touch to discuss the case and assess if there is a valid reason to create the account. Accounts should not be set up without prior approval from the Communications team.

It is the local account owner's responsibility to ensure their social media accounts are active and used regularly, and to monitor the effectiveness of their posts using the relevant analytic tools on each social media platform.

Service Leads are responsible for the effective use of niche social media channels within their service area, ensuring access is restricted to those employees who have permission to administer or post on the channel. If your account is approved by the Communications team, it is your responsibility to approach the Digital Services team to request channel set up and to ensure compliance with GDPR and cybersecurity policies at all times in the administering and use of the account.

Service Leads should ensure that social media administrators complete the COAST module on Managing Local Social Media Accounts.

The Communications team will aim to streamline local accounts wherever possible. Some local accounts can lie dormant for some time, have very few followers or little engagement. In these cases, the Communications team will work with the local account owner to establish if there is a clear need for the account and look at alternative options.



Using your local social media accounts

Positive Communication and Engagement using Social Media

If you are an administrator for a local social media account for your service area, it's important that you know what is and isn't appropriate content for your channels, and how to engage your audience.



1. Consider your message – is social media the best channel?
2. Consider the text you use – is it clear, in Plain English, and engaging?
3. Social media is visual – do you have suitable images which would illustrate your posts*?
4. Make your posts engaging – can you use appropriate video or other tools to engage your intended audience?
5. Avoid jargon – make sure your posts are understandable to everyone.
6. Be transparent – give as much accurate information, that's suitable for the public domain, as possible.
7. Use resources – include links to our [website](#), appropriate informative videos, images and text.
8. Share information from other reputable partners as appropriate, for example: Police Scotland, NHS and the Council's employee charity partner. Do not share information from personal social media accounts to Council channels.
9. Use an appropriate tone – you are representing the Council, so always respond in a tone that reflects positively and is appropriate for the channel.
10. Influence – place focus on the most important and influential issues and topics.

Always make sure the image you use is not affected by copyright/the owner of the image is credited. Where possible, take and use your own good quality images. It's also extremely important that you have the correct permissions and privacy notices in place when using images of people (the Information Governance team will be able to assist you with any queries you have about this).

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What not to do:

1. You should never post, repost or share social media that is of a political nature or could damage the reputation of the Council.
2. You should never repost or share any content of a political nature; images and/or quotes from Elected Members during a pre-election period**.
3. If you're in any doubt at all – don't post it. Please contact communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk

**Pre-election guidance is made available on the [Elections and Voting page](#) of our website 6-8 weeks prior to any local, Scottish Parliament or General Elections.



Engaging with your audience

Social media is a two-way communication tool, so remember to like and respond to positive comments. Use emojis where appropriate.

Make sure the language you use is engaging.

Managing comments and feedback on social media

If you are an administrator for a local social media account for your service area, it's really important that you ensure that the page is regularly monitored, and appropriate responses are sought to any relevant comments or questions from the appropriate service/manager in good time.

For example: If someone asks: "How do I make an appointment to visit Girvan Household Waste Recycling Centre today?", getting back to them the following day is no good. Social media is instant – people expect quick, accurate responses.

Sometimes it's not always possible to get the answer to more complex questions straight away. In these cases, it's appropriate to respond to the person so that they know that you are dealing with their question for example: "Thanks for getting in touch, we're looking into this for you and we'll come back to you as soon as possible."

Some people may try to use the Council's social media channels as a means to complain about a service or general issue. In these instances you should respond by directing them to the Council's complaints procedure '[Listening to You](#)'.



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Reacting to social media posts and comments on Council social media accounts

If you are a social media user, you may well come across posts or comments about, or directed to, the Council or a particular service area or employee.

Positive Posts

If you administer a local account and find a post online about your service area, or the Council in general, there are several things you need to consider before taking any action.

If the post is positive, you can do one, or a combination of the following:

- Let the post stand and take no further action;
- Like the post;
- Share the post where appropriate;
- Provide a positive response where appropriate.

If you are unsure, don't engage with it. If you need advice, contact communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk



Negative Posts

Sometimes people use social media to disagree with a Council decision or to make negative comments about the Council or particular services. While people have the right to comment, there are steps you should take where comment becomes offensive.



Offensive Posts/Comments:

- If the post is on one of the Council's social media channels and is offensive, degrading of others, or contains foul language, do not respond. You should report this as soon as possible to communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
- If the post is on an external site and is offensive, degrading of others, or contains foul language, do not respond. You should report this as soon as possible to communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk who will monitor the site and take action as appropriate.

Posts/comments that ridicule or make a joke of a person, or defame a person:

- If the post is on one of the Council's social media channels, please contact communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk. In some cases, advice will be sought from Legal Services.
- If the post is on an external site, it can be very difficult to have it removed. You should, however, report this as soon as possible to communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk. In some situations, advice will be sought from Legal Services.



If you are concerned about any comments or trends on any of the Council's social media channels, please contact the Communications team.

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Posts/comments that are incorrect or include misinformation about the Council:

- If the post is on one of the Council's social media channels, and you are in a position to correct the post with accurate information, you can do so. Your response should always remain courteous, and you should not get into a full conversation with the customer. You should only correct the misinformation and direct to accurate information e.g. on the Council's website.
- If the post is on an external site, you should report this as soon as possible to communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk who will monitor the site and take action as appropriate.



If in any doubt, please contact communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk in the first instance.



Social media – things to remember

Here are some of the top things to remember when using work or personal social and digital media channels:

- Use common sense;
- Follow any local sign off arrangements in place within your service before posting;
- Once it's gone, it's gone - remember anything you post could be permanent;
- It's not private – anyone can see what you post;
- Remember to stick to the Code of Conduct – don't post anything which would compromise the reputation of the Council whether acting in an official or personal capacity;
- If in doubt, don't post it;
- Check the accuracy and sensitivity of the content you are posting before pressing submit;
- Be aware of the tone you use, make sure it's suitable for your target audience and it's not patronising or abrupt;
- Use filters to ensure comments on your page don't appear if they contain any offensive or inappropriate language or phrases.

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Training

If you would like advice on sourcing social media training for your service, please contact communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk.

Contact details

If you have a query please email communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk or phone **0300 123 0900** (Monday - Thursday, 8.45am – 4.45pm and Friday, 8.45am - 4.00pm).

Please note that our social media accounts are not monitored 24/7 (including evenings, weekends and public holidays).

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Appendix 5



Media Relations Guidance

www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk

south
AYRSHIRE
COUNCIL
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Deas
Making a Difference Every Day

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IS KEY TO THE SUCCESSFUL DAY TO DAY RUNNING OF THE COUNCIL

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Introduction

This document outlines the protocols to be followed by South Ayrshire Council employees and Elected Members when dealing with the media. It provides direction and guidance on how to work with the media to help enhance and protect the reputation of the Council.

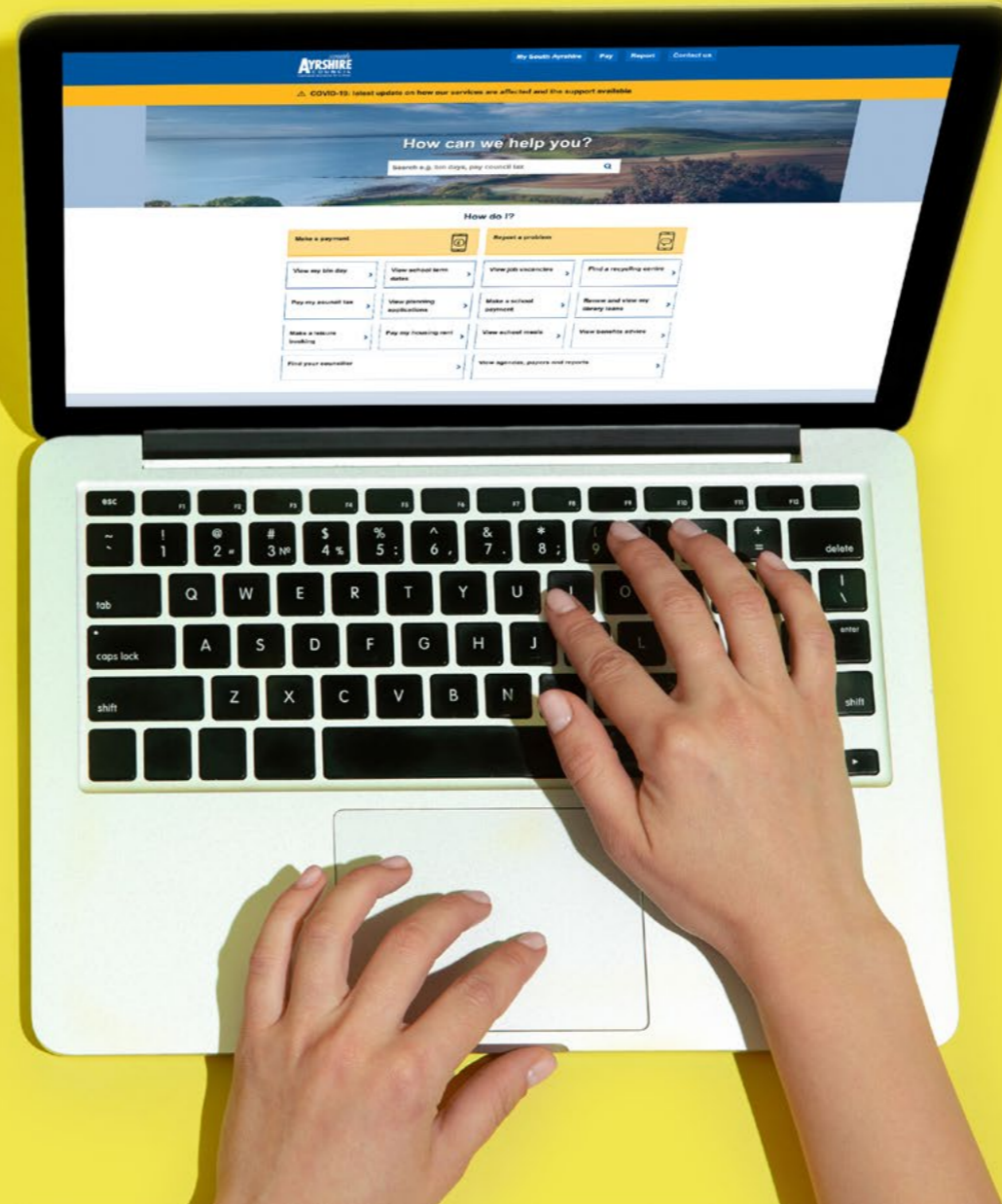
The guidance relates to Council activities only and applies to all staff and Elected Members when speaking on behalf of the Council, and to Elected Members who represent the Council on partnership organisations.

It also gives media personnel an indication of the service they can expect to receive from the Council.

Effective communication is key to the successful day to day running of the Council. It's therefore important that we regularly engage with residents; communities; partners; and employees to share our messages, promote our services and achievements, and raise the profile of the Council, in line with the [Council Plan 2023-28](#).

South Ayrshire Council has a range of communication channels which take priority when issuing messaging. This ensures residents who choose to engage with us receive information and updates direct from the Council, rather than a third-party source.

We understand the value the media brings in helping us to get our messages out to as wide an audience as possible. We are therefore committed to maintaining a positive working relationship with professional and accredited media organisations, and work in conjunction with them to supplement our own communication channels.



To ensure accuracy and consistency when dealing with the media, the Communications team co-ordinate media relations of behalf of the Council.

Our key aims in providing a media relations service are to:

- Proactively promote the Council and the services we provide, and enhance our reputation in local and national print; online; social media; radio and TV;
- Provide robust and prompt responses to media enquiries;
- Provide the media with timely, accurate information that is consistent in style and appropriate for the target audience;
- Respond quickly to any media inaccuracies about our services;
- Maintain effective working relationships with media personnel from all sectors.

Legal Context

Legislation exists which governs the publicity activities of local authorities. Under [Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986](#), it states that a local authority shall not “publish or assist others to publish material which, in whole or in part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party.”

All publicity the Council produces, including press releases and statements issued to the media, should comply with the [Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity](#).

Local authorities have an obligation to observe the Code prior to issuing any publicity. The Code’s key message is that publicity is a corporate function and should therefore reflect the Council’s views at all times. This means that it’s generally inappropriate to publicise individual Councillors, unless they are acting on behalf of the Council as a whole. Further information relating to the powers, duties and publication of information for local authorities in Scotland is available to view on the [Scottish Government Website](#).

Dealing with the Media

Media Enquiries - Services and Employees

All media enquiries are handled by the Communications team. The Communications team work with the appropriate Service Lead(s) and/or Chief Officer to agree an accurate, timeous response to any enquiries.

We work on the principle that information that can be released, will be released.

While it’s not always possible to meet media deadlines, we will acknowledge receipt of an enquiry and aim to provide a response as soon as possible. The sooner a response is provided, the more likely it is to form part of the media story and therefore, reflect the Council’s position/view on the matter.

As stated within the Council’s [Code of Conduct for Employees](#), “in an employee’s work with the Council, contact with the media must only take place where this has been authorised by a Head of Service or other designated Senior Officer. Employees who become aware of an issue that potentially will be of media interest must notify their line manager, who in turn must alert the Communications team.”

If you are approached directly by the media, either verbally or digitally, you should immediately refer the enquiry to the Communications team - this applies to all requests for interviews. Ideally, please ask them to send their enquiry to communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk, alternatively they can phone 0300 123 0900 to speak to a Communications Officer.

The table below outlines the Communications team and service responsibilities regarding media enquiries.

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM ACTIONS	SERVICE RESPONSIBILITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the service or services as soon as a press enquiry is received. • Provide advice and guidance on wording of response and any other communications suggested related to the press enquiry. • Liaise with journalists for clarification. • Issue agreed response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide accurate and timely information by way of response. • Sign off on agreed response. • Follow the media guidance at all times. Services should not liaise directly with the press or media. All enquiries should be directed to the Communications team.

All media enquiries received must be referred to Communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk.

Proactive Media – Press Releases

All proactive press releases are handled by the Communications team. Proactive releases allow us to invite the media to share our news, highlighting public awareness of Council decision making, events, and service changes.

Each message is only as good as the information provided to create it. The Communications team relies on services to provide accurate information for all pro-active messages to be released to the media, and services will be asked to sign-off on any final communications prior to issue.

The majority of press releases will include an appropriate quote from the relevant Portfolio Holder (with the exception of a pre-election period when the quote would be attributed to the Chief Executive or the relevant Director/Assistant Director/Service Lead).

For announcements relating to Civic matters, the Provost, or nominated representative, should be quoted.

In all cases, the quote will be approved by the person being quoted prior to issue. Where this is not possible within the required timescales, the quote should be cleared by the Leader of the Council, the Depute Leader or relevant Chief Officer.

All press releases are circulated to Elected Members upon issue and are uploaded to our [website](#).

The table below outlines the Communications team and service responsibilities:

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM ACTIONS	SERVICE RESPONSIBILITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft press release (and any associated social media posts etc.) based on key summary information from service. • Draft and agree Portfolio Holder (PFH) quotes with the relevant PFH as necessary. • Following service sign off, issue press release and add to Council website. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure you contact the Communications team at the earliest opportunity to request a press release. You should give at least 10 working days’ notice, unless it’s related to an emergency or unanticipated situation. • Provide summary information on key message to the Communications team, ensuring as much notice as possible. • Agree and sign off on final press release and any other related communications. • Supply a suitable image (at least 300kb in quality) and ensure all necessary permissions are in place to allow the image to be used on agreed communication channels.

Joint Press Releases

There are occasions where we will work with partner agencies to create and issue joint press releases. In these instances, one partner will generally take the lead on writing the release and circulating as appropriate for sign-off. It’s common practice for each organisation to supply a suitable quote.

Joint press releases will be released by the agreed lead organisation, unless they have limited channels for distribution, e.g. they only have the capability to distribute to niche publications as opposed to all local/national press.



Holding Statements

Service Leads/managers should make the Communications team aware, as soon as possible, of any potential issues within their service that could raise media interest.

In most cases, if no proactive communications are planned, a holding statement should be drafted and approved in advance as a response to any media enquiries.

The service should supply the Communications team with the relevant background information/detail of potential issue/enquiry to allow the statement to be drafted. All holding statements must be signed off by the relevant Service Lead/Chief Officer. In some cases, the holding statement may require to be signed off by various others e.g. the Chief Executive/Leader of the Council.

Even where a holding statement has been agreed, in all cases, the Communications team will notify the service of any media enquiries prior to a response being issued.

The table below outlines the Communications team and service responsibilities:

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM ACTIONS	SERVICE RESPONSIBILITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft holding statement based on key summary information from service. • Make service aware of any media enquiry and seek approval to issue holding statement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the Communications team aware of any potential issue that could raise media interest. • Provide background/summary information on key message for suggested response to Communications team, ensuring as much notice as possible. • Agree and sign off on final holding statement. • Confirm holding statement is still accurate and can be issued/revise holding statement accordingly prior to issue.

Media Releases following Council Meetings

It's important that the media are kept informed of Council decisions to allow them to help us get this information to the public.

Service Leads, or the appropriate manager, should contact the Communications team prior to Council meetings to advise of any communications requirements. This should be done at the same time the paper is submitted at Pre-ELT clearance stage via the [Communications Request Form](#).

Council Meetings are live-streamed. This means that it is important that any media releases coincide with the date of the panel. Where possible, any communications about Council decisions should be drafted and signed-off in advance to allow timely release if papers are approved.

Media releases are normally issued on the day of the panel meeting, and in some cases, as soon as the decision is made. Decisions that are subject to call in will be highlighted as such in any communications.

Information on Council or Panel discussions from which the public have been excluded cannot be disclosed to the media unless authorised by the Council or Cabinet, or the information has been made available under section 50B of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

The table below outlines the Communications team and service responsibilities:

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM ACTIONS	SERVICE RESPONSIBILITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft press release (and any associated social media posts etc.) based on key summary information from service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Lead or appropriate manager to contact the Communications team at time of submitting panel paper at pre-ELT clearance stage to advise of any communication requirements. • Service Lead or appropriate manager to provide summary information on key message. • Service Lead or appropriate manager to sign-off on all communications prior to issue and prior to the date of the panel meeting.

Media Interaction with Elected Members

Elected Members who are approached directly by the media for an official Council comment should consult with the Communications team prior to any response being issued. The Communications team will, where appropriate, liaise with the relevant service to gain information in order to provide support and guidance on the best way to respond.

The Communications team will refer any media enquiries that are deemed political to the Leader of the Council for a decision on whether the administration would like to respond politically. In line with the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity, the Communications team cannot provide support to issue political statements or press releases.

Elected Members can decide to engage directly with the media. In such cases, any comments, quotes or information provided by the Elected Member is deemed as their view and cannot be attributed to the Council.

Publicity ahead of Elections

When a Notice of Election is called, strict guidelines in relation to any publicity and media activity undertaken by the Council apply from then, until the day of the election.

The restrictions are set out in the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity: “The period between the notice of an election and the election itself should preclude proactive publicity in all its forms of candidates and other politicians involved directly in the election. Publicity should not deal with controversial issues or report views, proposals or recommendations in such a way that identifies them with individual members or groups of members.”

During an election period, proactive press releases and reactive media statements will include quotes from the relevant Chief Officer. No quotes from, or photographs of, Elected Members can be issued on behalf of the Council during this time.

Further information can be found in the Pre-Election Period Guidance document which is uploaded to the [elections and voting page](#) of our website around 6 – 8 weeks prior to any local, Scottish or UK Parliament Election.

Press Calls

There are occasions where we actively encourage the media to attend specific events to allow them to take photographs/conduct interviews with officers and/or Elected Members. These can include things like changes or additions to a service, such as the opening of a new Council building or events e.g. The International Ayr Show - Festival of Flight.

In most scenarios, press calls will be issued to all local press, however, there are occasions where only specific press outlets would be invited e.g. where radio coverage only is desired.

Services can request press/media calls via the Comumunications team by using the online [request form](#).



Photography

Images can really help to enhance any communications and better engage the audience. It's highly recommended that all media releases are accompanied by at least one good quality image.

The Communications team can help services to book a photographer to take images for a range of things including: events; presentations; good news stories/Council achievements; bank photography. The cost for commissioning any photography will, in most cases, be met by the service making the request.

There are some occasions where a member of the Communications team will take photographs to be used for promotional purposes for the Council.



Photocalls – who to invite

The Communications team can provide advice to services when arranging photocalls. Services are responsible for agreeing in writing (email) with the relevant Director/Assistant Director who should be invited to photocalls (including Elected Members, Chief Officers and partners).

Services are responsible for issuing all invites to photocalls.

Services should draft an appropriate brief for the photographer to ensure they know which images to capture at the photoshoot.

Services should send a representative from their team to attend the photocall.

When photocalls are organised by a service or directorate, it's important that the service commissioning the photography ensures the appropriate officers, Elected Members and partners are invited as outlined below.

IMPORTANT: If the correct invites are not issued for a photocall, the Communications team may not be able to issue the image on behalf of the Council.



Impartiality

All Council publicity and communication material must be neutral and impartial. All participants in Council photocalls should be asked to remove any items they have on display such as, emblems or badges that are deemed political, or might otherwise express an opinion that could compromise our impartiality.

If there's any doubt about whether a particular item could be problematic if it was displayed in a Council photograph, Elected Members or the service commissioning the photography, should seek advice from the Council's Monitoring Officer.

In cases where a photograph is taken that shows a participant wearing an item that compromises impartiality, and no other photo of the event is available for use, the Communications team will attempt to airbrush the item out prior to releasing the image. If this occurs, the service commissioning the photography is responsible for making the individual it affects aware of this.



Copyright

When external photographers are commissioned, the copyright stays with the photographer. However, the Council will ensure it has the freedom to use the images as required e.g. in Council publications such as reports; for issue to the media; for use on our website/intranet; in our quarterly magazine; and in any other publicity material used to promote the Council and our services.

The copyright for photographs taken by any member of the Communications team rests with the Council.

Copies of photographs commissioned directly by services to be used in conjunction with media releases should be submitted, with captions, to Communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk.

Consent

In all cases, images of people can only be used if the required consents and privacy notices are in place. The Communications privacy notice is available to view on our [website](#). Images without the necessary consents cannot be used in conjunction with any communications (internal or external). More information on consent and privacy notices can be obtained by contacting a member of the Information and Governance team.



IMPORTANT NOTE: It is the responsibility of the service who commissions the photography to ensure all appropriate consents and privacy notices are in place prior to the session commencing. Failure to do so may mean that some or all of your images cannot be used. If you have any queries about this, please contact the Information Governance team in the first instance.

Broadcast Media

The Communications team receives regular requests from both TV and radio media outlets. These range from filming on location in South Ayrshire for advertisements, TV shows and movies, to radio interview requests.

All broadcasting requests are handled by the Communications team. If you are approached directly by the media, either verbally or digitally, you should not attempt to deal with any requests at service level - always refer the media to the Communications team. Ideally, please ask them to send their request to communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk, alternatively they can phone 0300 123 0900 to speak to a Communications Officer.

The Communications team will help to facilitate any broadcast media requests and will work with the relevant service(s) to ensure the Council and the local area is reflected in the best light possible. For example, on receipt of a request to film on one of our beaches, the Communications team would contact the Neighbourhood Services team to ensure the area is clean, tidy and well-presented. On receipt of a request to interview a Council representative regarding a Council matter, the Communications team would make the relevant service(s) aware and arrange for the appropriate Portfolio Holder/Leader of the Council/member of CLT to be available at a mutually suitable time.

The Chief Executive and Leader of the Council must be informed prior to any filming/interviewing taking place for news bulletin items; large-scale productions including films, TV shows and advertisements; and filming that could have an impact on the Council's reputation.

The table below outlines the Communications team and service responsibilities:

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM ACTIONS	SERVICE RESPONSIBILITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notify relevant service(s) of the broadcasting request. • Liaise with media/interviewee to arrange mutually suitable time for both parties. • Make Chief Executive/Leader of the Council aware of filming/interviewing taking place as appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check proposed site for filming is suitable, clean and tidy. • Provide the Communications team with any necessary information for interviewee.



Civil Contingencies Media

The media can play a key role in helping to disseminate information in times of crises. In cases of civil emergencies, the Communications team will work with services/Gold/Silver Group to agree any appropriate media messages.

In cases of civil emergencies, the Communications team will issue any appropriate information to allow media to aid distribution of key and important messages.

The table below outlines the Communications team and service responsibilities in cases of media coverage around civil emergencies:

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM ACTIONS	SERVICE RESPONSIBILITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with service or Gold/Silver Group to agree key media messages and corporate communications approach e.g. press releases; drafting and issuing of corporate communications using a range of media; media handling; sign off arrangements etc. Provide advice and guidance on targeted media messaging developed by the relevant service or group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact the Communications team to advise of emerging situations. Provide key and brief details/information. Agree key media messages and approach. Consider any further media messaging required. Sign off on agreed media releases.

Media Coverage

The Communications team monitors local media coverage relating to the Council and can provide advice and support on how to respond to inaccuracies in reported information.

Any concerns regarding media inaccuracies should be highlighted to the Communications team.

Advertising

Services often place advertisements across a range of different media outlets e.g. print; radio; television and social media. In all cases advertising requests should be submitted via Advertising@south-ayrshire.gov.uk to ensure best value and consistency of the Council brand at all times.

In-house design advice and support can also be provided for advertisements, however, at least four weeks' notice is required for any requests for design work.

Contact Details

If you have a query regarding press or media, please email communications@south-ayrshire.gov.uk or phone 0300 123 0900 (Monday - Thursday, 8.45am – 4.45pm and Friday, 8.45am - 4.00pm).

If you have an emergency civil contingencies enquiry regarding press or media, outwith normal working hours, please contact our Emergency Response Team on 0300 123 0900.

DRAFT

www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk

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AYRSHIRE
COUNCIL
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Deas
Making a Difference Every Day

**South Ayrshire Council
Equality Impact Assessment including Fairer Scotland Duty**

Section One: Policy Details*

Name of Policy	Communications Strategy
Lead Officer (Name/Position)	Gillian Farrell, Service Lead, OD and Customer Services
Support Team (Names/Positions) including Critical Friend	Sara Burdon – Coordinator - Communicatios

*The term Policy is used throughout the assessment to embrace the full range of policies, procedures, strategies, projects, applications for funding or financial decisions.

What are the main aims of the policy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To increase and grow our audience ensuring communication reach a wide and diverse range of people in our communities. ▪ To promote South Ayrshire as a destination of choice using a range of communication methods; ▪ To align communications to the service planning process.
What are the intended outcomes of the policy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More people can access communications about the council and South Ayrshire events and attractions in a range of digital and non-digital ways; ▪ Service Leads align communications plans and campaigns to the service planning process, highlighting those which drive the Council Plan

Section Two: What are the Likely Impacts of the Policy?

Will the policy impact upon the whole population of South Ayrshire and/or particular groups within the population? (please specify)	Strategy is aimed at the whole population
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Considering the following Protected Characteristics and themes, what likely impacts or issues does the policy have for the group or community?

List any likely positive and/or negative impacts.

Protected Characteristics	Positive and/or Negative Impacts
Age: Issues relating to different age groups e.g. older people or children and young people	The strategy builds on work already undertaken to grow our audience in terms of corporate communications reach. This includes using a range of methods to reach all community groups including social media; digital; radio and TV advertising; posters, vinyls and graphics; public facing TVs and the council's printed quarterly magazine which is distributed across South Ayrshire to reach a non-digital audience.
Disability: Issues relating to disabled people	As above. Accessibility checks are carried out on communications which are produced and communications can be made available in a range of formats.
Gender Reassignment – Trans/Transgender: Issues relating to people who have proposed, started or completed a process to change his or her sex	No anticipated impact.
Marriage and Civil Partnership: Issues relating to people who are married or are in a civil partnership	No anticipated impact.
Pregnancy and Maternity: Issues relating to woman who are pregnant and/or on maternity leave	No anticipated impact.
Race: Issues relating to people from different racial groups, (BME) ethnic minorities, including Gypsy/Travellers	The strategy builds on work already undertaken to grow our audience in terms of corporate communications reach. This includes using a range of methods to reach all community groups including social media; digital; radio and TV advertising; posters, vinyls and graphics; public facing TVs and the council's printed quarterly magazine which is distributed across South Ayrshire to reach a non-digital audience. Communications can be made available in a range of languages on request.
Religion or Belief: Issues relating to a person's religion or belief (including non-belief)	No anticipated impact.
Sex: Gender identity: Issues specific to women and men/or girls and boys	No anticipated impact
Sexual Orientation: Issues relating to a person's sexual orientation i.e. LGBT+, heterosexual/straight	No anticipated impact.

Equality and Diversity Themes Relevant to South Ayrshire Council	Positive and/or Negative Impacts
Health Issues and impacts affecting people's health	No anticipated impact
Human Rights: Issues and impacts affecting people's human rights such as being treated with dignity and respect, the right to education, the right to respect for private and family life, and the right to free elections.	No anticipated impact

Socio-Economic Disadvantage	Positive and/or Negative Impacts
Low Income/Income Poverty: Issues: cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food and clothing.	No anticipated impact.
Low and/or no wealth: Issues: enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future	No anticipated impact.
Material Deprivation: Issues: being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure/hobbies	No anticipated impact.
Area Deprivation: Issues: where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of transport)	No anticipated impact.

Section Three: Evidence Used in Developing the Policy

Involvement and Consultation In assessing the impact(s) set out above what evidence has been collected from involvement, engagement or consultation? Who did you involve, when and how ?	Public survey on communications provided high level information on how people get information about the council and how they want to hear about council news and information; Feedback from campaign evaluations – all campaigns are evaluated for effectiveness; audience reach and engagement.
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	Social media analytics regularly reviewed and provide information on audience profile.
Data and Research In assessing the impact set out above what evidence has been collected from research or other data. Please specify what research was carried out or data collected, when and how this was done.	As above
Partners data and research In assessing the impact(s) set out in Section 2 what evidence has been provided by partners? Please specify partners	n/a
Gaps and Uncertainties Have you identified any gaps or uncertainties in your understanding of the issues or impacts that need to be explored further?	n/a

Section Four: Detailed Action Plan to address identified gaps in:

- a) evidence and
- b) to mitigate negative impacts

No.	Action	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale
	None identified		

Note: Please add more rows as required.

Section Five - Performance monitoring and reporting

Considering the policy as a whole, including its equality and diversity implications:

When is the policy intended to come into effect?	December 2023
When will the policy be reviewed?	May 2028
Which Panel will have oversight of the policy?	XXXX

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Section 6

South Ayrshire Council

Appendix

Summary Equality Impact Assessment Implications & Mitigating Actions

Name of Policy: Communications Strategy

This policy will assist or inhibit the Council’s ability to eliminate discrimination; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations as follows:

<p>Eliminate discrimination</p> <p>The strategy builds on work already undertaken to grow our audience in terms of corporate communications reach. This includes using a range of methods to reach all community groups including social media; digital; radio and TV advertising; posters, vinyls and graphics; public facing TVs and the council’s printed quarterly magazine which is distributed across South Ayrshire to reach a non-digital audience.</p>
<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p>
<p>Foster good relations</p>
<p>Consider Socio-Economic Disadvantage (Fairer Scotland Duty)</p> <p>The strategy provides free, accessible communications about the work of the council in a range of ways.</p>

Summary of Key Action to Mitigate Negative Impacts	
Actions	Timescale
None identified	

Signed: Gillian FarrellService Lead
Date: 12th October 20283

South Ayrshire Council

**Report by Assistant Director – Housing and Operations
and Head of Finance, ICT and Procurement
to South Ayrshire Council (Special)
of 17 January 2024**

Subject: Setting of Council House Rents and Other Rents and Charges (2024/25 – 2026/27) and Proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue Budget 2024/25 and Capital Budget (2024/25 – 2028/29)

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is for the Council to set an appropriate level for Council house rents, lock-up and garage site rents and other charges for the period 2024/25 – 2026/27 and to approve the proposed HRA revenue budget for 2024/25 and the proposed 5 year capital budget for 2024/25 – 2028/29.

2. Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that the Council:

- 2.1.1 takes account of the consultation results and feedback from tenants as outlined at [Appendix 1](#), and agrees to apply a fixed council house rent increase of 4.5% each year for 3 years from 2024/25 – 2026/27;
- 2.1.2 agrees to apply a 4.5% increase each year for 3 years from 2024/25 – 2026/27 to other rents and charges recovered through the HRA. This includes:- lock-up rents, garage site rents, garden maintenance charges, communal heating and amenity charges;
- 2.1.3 agrees to retain the existing rental charges for all types of homeless temporary accommodation;
- 2.1.4 approves the proposed 2024/25 HRA revenue budget outlined in section 4.2 of this report and [Appendix 2](#) and the proposed 5 year capital budget as outlined in section 2.3 of this report and [Appendix 3](#); and
- 2.1.5 notes the results from tenant feedback, as outlined in section 4.4 and [Appendix 1](#) of this report, on the preferred ways to contact the Housing Service and notes that these results will be used to inform how teams are organised and any future considerations and proposals around shaping the model of service delivery.

3. Background

- 3.1 Following previous consultations undertaken in 2011, 2014, 2017 and 2020 the Council has agreed rent setting arrangements with tenants on each of these occasions for a 3-year period. 2023/24 is the final year of the previously agreed 3-year setting of rents and other charges within the HRA, and the current rent setting arrangement comes to an end on 20 March 2024.
- 3.2 Taking account of previous feedback and the fact that tenants have previously advised that they favour an arrangement which is not year on year, the similar principle of a 3-year arrangement has formed the basis of this current consultation to inform the next rent setting decision by Council.
- 3.3 As outlined in the report to the meeting of South Ayrshire Council on 1 March 2023, when preparing the 2023/24 budget, it was acknowledged that the rate of inflation was higher than previously assumed and this was impacting on revenue and capital budgets. As part of the approved 2023/24 HRA budget, budgets were adjusted and this contributed to offsetting increased pressures in others areas. An uncommitted sum of £1m has been used in 2023/24 to help mitigate rising repairs costs. Despite the budget and wider economic challenges, in recognition that 2023/24 was the final year of the previously agreed 1.5% rent increase and taking account of other cost of living pressures, the Council maintained its' commitment to apply the 1.5% increase in 2023/24. From published benchmark data South Ayrshire Council had the lowest increase at 1.5% in 2023/24, when rent increases across Scottish Local Authorities (excluding stock transfer authorities) ranged from 1.5% to 6.4%. Taking account of the cost of living pressures in 2023/24, Scottish Government Ministers agreed with Council's to keep rent increases to an average of less than £5.00 per week. Based on the 2022/23 average weekly rent of £79.31 (over a 52 week period), the 2023/24 rent increase of 1.5% applied by the Council equated to an average increase of £1.19 per week, which was well below the agreed permitted average at that time.
- 3.4 Officers from Housing Services and Financial Services have updated the HRA Business Plan in respect of current and projected levels of revenue and capital expenditure. This update has taken account of commitments agreed with tenants in respect of cycles of modernisation and future levels of investment needed to maintain the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) and work to continually improve the housing stock to meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH). It also takes account of the Council's commitments and proposals as outlined in the Strategic Housing Investment Plan, in respect of maintaining the future supply for affordable housing for rent.
- 3.5 The updated business plan, together with considerations around maintaining affordability, have informed the options on the next proposed rent increase. Following consultation with Portfolio Holders - Councillors Kilbride and Davis, the following options were agreed to form the basis of the consultation with tenants on proposed future rent increases for the 3-year period from 2024/25 – 2026/27: -
- **Option 1** – Increase rents by 4.5% each year;
 - **Option 2** – Increase rents by 4.75% each year; and
 - **Option 3** – Increase rents by 5.0% each year.

- 3.6 There is a statutory requirement for the Council to consult with tenants on rent setting. At the time of the previous consultation in November/December 2020, Covid-19 restrictions were in place, this limited the level and range of consultation that could take place with tenants. From other survey data, tenants had advised that the tenants' newsletter was their preferred type of communication from the Council. On that basis, a Rent Setting Consultation Newsletter was produced taking account of feedback and suggestions from Tenant Representatives and Interested Tenants. 367 votes were registered in the last round of consultation in 2020, and this was the best consultation response rate the Council has achieved in respect of rent setting. On this basis, the same format was used to conduct this latest round of consultation, incorporating feedback and input to the consultation newsletter from the Tenants Monitoring Group.
- 3.7 The Rent Setting Consultation was published on the Council's website and promoted via the Housing Services Facebook page and via a tenant representative podcast. The Rent Setting Newsletter was issued to all tenants by post and to all new tenants who signed their tenancy agreement during the consultation period which was open from 24 November to 20 December 2023. To help tenants make an informed choice, the newsletter contained the following information:- the background and reason for the consultation, an overview of the Housing Revenue Account and how rental income is used, the investment priorities and current commitments – including the proposed level of capital investment over the next 5 years in the region of £195 million, information on how the Council's rent levels compare with other social landlords and how the previous rent increase applied compares with other local authorities, information on ways tenants can seek help if they are struggling with rent payments, information on the considerations around rising costs and the provisions to manage risk within the housing business plan, and details on each of the rent setting options being presented to tenants for their vote.
- 3.8 The meeting of South Ayrshire Council on 29 June 2023 approved the future operating model for Customer Services. Taking account of this approved model, and given that the newsletter was being sent to all tenants, the opportunity was taken to ask tenants to indicate their top 2 preferred ways to contact the Housing Service.
- 3.9 A briefing note was issued to all Elected Members on 23 November 2023, this provided an overview of the consultation process and a copy of the newsletter and voting form that was issued to all tenants. A web link to the rent setting consultation and newsletter is included in the background papers section of this report.
- 3.10 As part of the last rent setting approved by Council in January 2021, it was agreed to freeze the rent levels for all homeless temporary accommodation. In 2018/19 subsidy levels were reduced for leased homeless accommodation, to date, each year, this has been mitigated by funding received from the Scottish Government.
- 3.11 As part of the budget and capital programme monitoring arrangements, the budgetary position of the HRA revenue and capital budgets are reported to Cabinet throughout the year. The HRA accumulated surplus as at 1 April 2023 was £3.278m, this was inclusive of the £2m minimum working balance, £1m held within the committed surplus which has been approved for use in 2023/24 to help mitigate rising repairs costs and £0.213m of current commitments. This left an uncommitted surplus of £0.065m. The HRA budget monitoring report for the period to 30 September 2023 (period 6) was approved by Cabinet on 28 November 2023, and the 2023/24 projected uncommitted surplus for the HRA was £0.556m.

4. Proposals

4.1 *Rent Setting Proposals for 2024/25 – 2026/27*

- 4.1.1 A total of 397 valid votes were registered as part of the rent setting consultation. The consultation results are summarised at [Appendix 1](#), and these have been used to inform the proposals and recommendations within this report.
- 4.1.2 Taking account of the consultation results and feedback from tenants, it is proposed that Council agrees to apply an increase 4.5% each year to council house rents, for the 3-year period from 2024/25 – 2026/27. This will allow the Council to meet the costs of delivering the housing service and maintain the current and proposed levels of funding needed to deliver the housing capital investment programme.
- 4.1.3 It is proposed that other rents and charges recovered through the HRA also increase by 4.5% each year for the 3-year period from 2024/25 – 2026/27. This includes lock-up rents, garage site rents, garden maintenance charges, communal heating and amenity charges.
- 4.1.4 Taking account of considerations around future subsidy arrangements and funding arrangements for homeless temporary accommodation, it is proposed that existing rent levels for all types of homeless temporary accommodation remain unchanged at this time.

4.2 *Proposed HRA Revenue Budget 2024/25*

- 4.2.1 The approved 2023/24 and proposed 2024/25 HRA budget are outlined in [Appendix 2](#). The proposed base budget for 2024/25, reflects the proposed rent increase of 4.5% and includes for the following:
- payroll costs that reflect the proposed Council pay award;
 - current bad debt provision at 2% of rents receivable in the year;
 - debt charges are based on planned capital investment detailed in section 4.3 below and as outlined in [Appendix 3](#);
 - housing and lock-up stock numbers, and future planned lock up demolitions previously approved by Council;
 - the base budget for maintenance costs has been increased, taking account of increased materials costs. The required uplifts to schedule of rates and an assumed annual inflationary increase has been applied per annum for all other expenditure for the life of the business plan;
 - a level of revenue contribution to help fund the housing capital programme – Capital Funded from Current Revenue (CFCR); and
 - an assumed rent increase of 4.5% for the next 3 years and then an assumed minimum rent increase of 3.0% each year for the life of the business plan.
- 4.2.2 Any future reprofiling of the revenue budget will be reported through the budget monitoring reports to Cabinet.

4.3 **Proposed Housing Capital Budget 2024/25 – 2028/29**

4.3.1 The Housing Capital Programme is presented on a rolling five-year planning cycle to provide greater certainty over future capital investment activity and to allow for better year on year planning and engagement with tenants. The following table outlines the proposed housing capital investment programme for the period 2024/25 – 2028/29, indicating a proposed cumulative spend of £199.586m over the next five-year period. Progress against the housing capital investment programme is reported to Cabinet periodically throughout the year. Each year an updated budget will be presented to Council as part of the HRA budget setting process.

4.3.2 The proposed housing capital budget for the period 2024/25 – 2028/29 includes for the following:

- reflects the budget and adjustments approved for the Housing Capital Programme 2023/24; Monitoring Report as at 30 September 2023, as approved by Cabinet on 28 November 2023;
- an internal modernisation cycle of 15/30 years as previously agreed with tenants, allowing around 2800 properties to be included in projects for full and partial modernisation work over the course of the next 5 years;
- financial provision for safety and compliance work for tenant and resident safety (replacing smoke alarms, heat and carbon monoxide detectors, fixed electrical work and dealing with asbestos materials);
- financial provision over the next 5 years to continue the programme of window replacement to renew windows in remaining properties where windows are over 25 years old;
- taking account of updated and refreshed stock condition data, an increased financial provision has been made to continue the 'fabric first' approach to replace roof coverings, upgrade or replace external wall finishes, install external wall insulation or upgrade/replace cavity wall insulation to improve the energy efficiency of properties and support work towards meeting net zero in properties that are recognised as being harder to treat in terms of thermal efficiency;
- proposed expenditure on new build housing is aligned with the Council's agreed SHIP, and then an assumption of 30 new build units each year thereafter for the life of the plan;
- buy-back of properties at a rate of 30 each year from 2024/25 – 2027/28 and 25 each year for 2028/29 – 2029/30, followed by 20 each year thereafter for the life of the plan; and
- the debt affordability level not exceeding 35% as previously agreed with tenants.

4.4 **Consultation Results – Preferred Ways to Contact the Housing Service**

4.4.1 A summary of the consultation results on the preferred ways for tenants to contact the Housing Service are outlined in [Appendix 1](#). From the votes cast, the preferences expressed are ranked as follows:

- By Phone – 290 votes
- A face-to-face appointment in a Council building - 142 votes
- A face-to-face appointment in your home – 115 votes
- Digital contact using email, online enquiry forms or online service requests – 100 votes
- Phone Appointment – 49 votes
- No preference expressed – 9 voting forms

4.4.2 The feedback received will help inform considerations around how best to organise the Housing teams and any future considerations and proposals around shaping the model of service delivery for Housing Services.

5. Legal and Procurement Implications

5.1 The recommendations in this report are consistent with legal requirements. In accordance with the statutory requirement, once a decision on future rent setting is approved by Council, tenants will be provided with the required 4 weeks' notice of the change and the increase being applied to their rent liability.

5.2 There are no direct procurement implications arising from this report. Professional Design Services will liaise with Procurement on any contractual requirements needed for the delivery of the housing capital programme.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 The proposals within this report ensure that the HRA Business Plan is fundable and sustainable over 40 years, taking account of considered risks and the current levels of proposed investment.

7. Human Resources Implications

7.1 Not applicable.

8. Risk

8.1 *Risk Implications of Adopting the Recommendations*

8.1.1 Adopting the recommendations will provide increased levels of capital spend over the next 5 year period. Given the mixed tenure nature of the housing stock, the delivery of the housing capital programme involves an element of engagement with owners regarding upgrade work and the availability of scheme of assistance grant funding to offer support to owners. There are established procedures in place to manage the owner engagement process, but the engagement process takes time and can impact on the programming and delivery of work. This risk has been identified and assessed in line with the Council's risk management process. It will be managed within existing operational activities and reference to the status of mitigations will be available through the Housing, Operations and Development Directorate Risk Register.

8.2 **Risk Implications of Rejecting the Recommendations**

- 8.2.1 Rejecting the recommendations would have a detrimental impact on the HRA budget and would affect the ability to deliver the housing service and secure the funding required for investment to maintain and improve the Council's housing stock to meet the requirements of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, improving energy efficiency and undertaking work towards net zero. This would have a negative impact on the achievement or contribution towards Priority 2 of the Council Plan: Live, Work, Learn, and the outcome 'everyone has access to a variety of housing types and sizes and a home that is affordable, energy efficient and adaptable to changing needs'.
- 8.2.2 Rejecting the recommendations would impact on the reputation of the Council, as previous commitments to tenants would not be able to be fulfilled. It would also impact on the Council's ability to meet its' statutory requirement to provide tenants with 4 weeks' notice of any change to their rental charge.

9. **Equalities**

- 9.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA), (including the Fairer Scotland Duty in respect of any Strategic decision), has been carried out on the proposals contained in this report, which identifies potential positive and negative equality impacts and any required mitigating actions. The EQIA is attached as [Appendix 4](#).

10. **Sustainable Development Implications**

- 10.1 **Considering Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)** - This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme or strategy or document otherwise described which could be considered to constitute a plan, programme, policy or strategy.

11. **Options Appraisal**

- 11.1 An options appraisal has not been carried out in relation to the subject matter. However, following updates to the HRA Business Plan, options on rent increases formed the basis of consultation with tenants as outlined in this report.

12. **Link to Council Plan**

- 12.1 The matters referred to in this report contribute to Priority 2 of the Council Plan: Live, Work, Learn - Everyone has access to a variety of housing types and sizes and a home that is affordable, energy efficient and adaptable to changing needs.

13. **Results of Consultation**

- 13.1 There has been consultation with the Tenants Monitoring Group. Three meetings were held with the Group on 9 November, 14 November and 17 November 2023. Tenants were provided with a presentation on the HRA Business Plan considerations and assumptions used to inform the options for consultation. The Group was also consulted on the proposed content of the Rent Setting Newsletter and the approach for tenant consultation. Comments and feedback received from the Group influenced the final content of the newsletter and the consultation approach.

- 13.2 The rent setting consultation was open to all Council tenants. A Rent Setting Newsletter and voting form was issued to every tenant. The consultation period was open from 24 November – 20 December 2023 inclusive. Tenants were able to register their vote for their preferred option for future rent setting either online or by postal vote, along with providing their feedback on their two preferred ways to contact the Housing Service.
- 13.3 Consultation has taken place with Councillor Martin Kilbride, Portfolio Holder for Buildings, Housing and Environment, and Councillor Ian Davis, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Human Resources and ICT, and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

14. Next Steps for Decision Tracking Purposes

- 14.1 If the recommendations above are approved by Members, the Assistant Director – Housing and Operations and the Head of Finance, ICT and Procurement will ensure that all necessary steps are taken to ensure full implementation of the decision within the following timescales, with the completion status reported to the Cabinet in the ‘Council and Cabinet Decision Log’ at each of its meetings until such time as the decision is fully implemented:

Implementation	Due date	Managed by
Implement agreed rent setting with effect from 21 March 2024	21 March 2024	Service Lead – Housing Services
To set up appropriate accounting budgets for 2024/25 to reflect Council decision	1 April 2024	Head of Finance, ICT and Procurement

Background Papers **Rent Setting Consultation - [Rent Setting Consultation 2023 - South Ayrshire Council \(south-ayrshire.gov.uk\)](#)**

Report to South Ayrshire Council (Special) of 20 January 2021 – [Setting of Council House Rents and Other Rents and Charges \(2021/22 – 2023/24\) and Proposed Housing Revenue Account \(HRA\) Revenue Budget 2021/22 and Capital Budget \(2021/22 - 2025/26\)](#)

Report to South Ayrshire Council of 3 March 2022 – [Housing Revenue Account \(HRA\) – Revenue Budget 2022/23 and Capital Budget 2022/23 to 2026/27](#)

Report to South Ayrshire Council of 1 March 2023 – [Rent Setting and Housing Revenue Account \(HRA\) – Revenue Budget 2023/24 and Capital Budget 2023/24 to 2027/28](#)

Report to South Ayrshire Council of 29 June 2023 - [Future Operating Proposals – Customer Services](#)

Report to Cabinet of 28 November 2023 – [Budget Management – Revenue Budgetary Control 2023/24 – Position at 30 September 2023](#)

Report to Cabinet of 28 November 2023 – [Housing Capital 2023/24: Monitoring Report as at 30 September 2023](#)

Person to Contact

**Tim Baulk, Head of Finance, ICT and Procurement
County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr, KA7 1DR
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E-mail tim.baulk@south-ayrshire.gov.uk**

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County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr, KA7 1DR
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**Michael Alexander, Service Lead – Housing Services
Riverside House, 21 River Terrace, Ayr, KA8 0AU
Phone 01292 612921
E-mail michael.alexander@south-ayrshire.gov.uk**

Date: 11 January 2024

Summary of Results from Rents Consultation

Consultation Numbers

Number of newsletters/voting forms issued to occupied properties as at 19 November 2023	7785
Number of newsletters/voting forms issued to new tenants in the period 20 November – 20 December 2023	71
Overall number of newsletters/voting forms issued	7856
Total Number of Valid Votes Registered Online	88
Total Number of Valid Votes Registered via postal votes	309
Overall Number of Valid Votes Registered	397
Response Rate	5%
Number of invalid voting forms (not able to be counted for the following reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No name and address details provided to validate the vote No rent setting option was selected on the voting form Online vote registered and postal vote also submitted (online vote was counted) 	13

Rent Setting Consultation Options

Rent Setting Options	Number of Votes	% of Vote
• Option 1 - Increase rents by 4.5% each year for 3 years	305	76.8%
• Option 2 - Increase rents by 4.75% each year for 3 years	53	13.4%
• Option 3 - Increase rents by 5% each year for 3 years	39	9.8%

Preferred Ways to Contact the Housing Service

Respondents were asked select their 2 top preferred ways to make contact. From the overall number of votes cast, the results are as follows:-

Contact Options	Number of Votes
By Phone	290
By Phone Appointment	49
Digital contact using email, online enquiry forms or online service requests	100
A face-to-face appointment in your home	115
A face-to-face appointment in a Council building	142
No Options Chosen	9

Approved 2023/24 and Proposed 2024/25 HRA Revenue Budget

<i>Approved Budget 2023/24 £m</i>	<i>Subjective Analysis</i>	<i>Proposed Budget 2024/25 £m</i>
5.232	Employee costs	5.357
12.869	Property costs	15.463
0.327	Supplies and services	0.334
0.070	Transport costs	0.072
1.405	Administration costs	1.589
1.801	Support service costs	1.837
0.029	Third party payments	0.030
0.114	Transfer payments	0.117
4.257	Financing costs	7.038
7.510	CFCR	1.798
33.614	Gross Expenditure	33.635
(33.614)	Income	(33.635)
0	Net Expenditure	0

Proposed Housing Capital Budget 2024/25 – 2028/29

<i>Activity</i>	<i>2024/25</i>	<i>2025/26</i>	<i>2026/27</i>	<i>2027/28</i>	<i>2028/29</i>
	<i>£m</i>	<i>£m</i>	<i>£m</i>	<i>£m</i>	<i>£m</i>
Major Component Replacements – Allocated	3.034	0.184	0	0	0
Major Component Replacements – Unallocated	14.322	14.322	11.381	11.341	11.341
Contingencies	0.269	0.269	0.269	0.269	0.269
Demolitions	0.067	0.067	0.067	0	0
Structural and Environmental	10.779	9.579	6.454	6.454	6.454
Fees	0.230	0.230	0.230	0.230	0.230
Footpaths	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050
Window Replacement Programme	3.939	3.939	3.939	3.939	3.939
Environmental Improvements	0.707	0.707	0.361	0.361	0.361
Buy back properties	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
New builds	29.993	12.650	2.990	14.030	4.140
<i>Total Expenditure</i>	<i>64.390</i>	<i>42.997</i>	<i>26.741</i>	<i>37.674</i>	<i>27.784</i>

This capital programme would be funded as follows:

Income Source	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
CFCR	1.798	0.992	1.036	1.205	1.461
Borrowing	61.547	38.035	22.989	31.621	25.069
Scottish Government Funding	1.045	3.970	2.716	4.848	1.254
Total	64.390	42.997	26.741	37.674	27.784
Net	0	0	0	0	0

South Ayrshire Council
Equality Impact Assessment including Fairer Scotland Duty

Section One: Policy Details*

Name of Policy	Setting of Council House Rents and Other Rents and Charges (2024/25 – 2026/27) and Proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue Budget 2024/25 and Capital Budget (2024/25 – 2028/29)
Lead Officer (Name/Position)	Michael Alexander – Service Lead, Housing Services
Support Team (Names/Positions) including Critical Friend	Claudine Johnston – Co-ordinator, Housing Services Kevin Anderson, Service Lead, Performance, Policy & Community Planning

*The term Policy is used throughout the assessment to embrace the full range of policies, procedures, strategies, projects, applications for funding or financial decisions.

What are the main aims of the policy?	To set an appropriate rent level for Council house rents, lock-up and garage site rents and other charges for the period 2024/25 – 2026/27 and to approve the proposed HRA revenue budget for 2024/25 and the proposed 5 year capital budget for 2024/25 – 2028/29.
What are the intended outcomes of the policy?	Taking account of consultation results and feedback from tenants, the intended outcome is for the Council to set an appropriate rent level within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). It is recommended in the report that the Council applies the lowest level of rent increase from the options presented to tenants in the recent rent consultation. The increase is required to provide the necessary funding to deliver the Council's housing service to tenants and to support the funding necessary to invest in the Council's housing stock to maintain and improve properties to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, improve energy efficiency standards and increase the supply of affordable housing to meet the needs of households in housing need.

Section Two: What are the Likely Impacts of the Policy?

Will the policy impact upon the whole population of South Ayrshire and/or particular groups within the population? (please specify)	<p>If approved by Council, the decision will have an impact on all council tenants who have a secure and short Scottish secure tenancy, lock up tenancy, garage site agreement and tenants liable for other charges such as amenity charges or heating charges, as it will increase the level of rent and other charges applied by the Council.</p> <p>It will have a positive impact on the available funding for the Council to deliver the housing service to all tenants and undertake an ongoing capital investment programme to improve the existing stock and increase the supply of</p>
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	<p>affordable housing to meet the needs of households in housing need.</p> <p>If approved by Council, the decision would mean no change to rent levels for homeless temporary accommodation and this would have a positive impact on homeless households occupying temporary accommodation.</p>
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Considering the following Protected Characteristics and themes, what likely impacts or issues does the policy have for the group or community?

List any likely positive and/or negative impacts.

Protected Characteristics	Positive and/or Negative Impacts
Age: Issues relating to different age groups e.g. older people or children and young people	Positive Impact - The proposals for rent setting provide the funding required to maintain and improve the existing housing stock, while also including provision to increase the supply of affordable housing to meet the needs of tenants and prospective tenants of all ages.
Disability: Issues relating to disabled people	Positive Impact - There is provision with the HRA budget to provide adaptations in council owned properties, taking account of any assessed needs by Occupational Therapists. This improves accessibility for disabled tenants within council owned properties.
Gender Reassignment – Trans/Transgender: Issues relating to people who have proposed, started or completed a process to change his or her sex	There are no specific impacts relating to this particular characteristic.
Marriage and Civil Partnership: Issues relating to people who are married or are in a civil partnership	There are no specific impacts relating to this particular characteristic.
Pregnancy and Maternity: Issues relating to woman who are pregnant and/or on maternity leave	There are no specific impacts relating to this particular characteristic.
Race: Issues relating to people from different racial groups, (BME) ethnic minorities, including Gypsy/Travellers	There are no specific impacts relating to this particular characteristic.
Religion or Belief: Issues relating to a person's religion or belief (including non-belief)	There are no specific impacts relating to this particular characteristic.
Sex: Issues specific to women and men/or girls and boys	There are no specific impacts relating to this particular characteristic.

<p>Sexual Orientation: Issues relating to a person's sexual orientation i.e. LGBT+, heterosexual/straight</p>	<p>There are no specific impacts relating to this particular characteristic.</p>
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<p>Equality and Diversity Themes Relevant to South Ayrshire Council</p>	<p>Positive and/or Negative Impacts</p>
<p>Health Issues and impacts affecting people's health</p>	<p>The setting of an appropriate rent level and other levels of charges within the Housing Revenue Account ensures the necessary budgets and funding is available to deliver the housing service and invest in council owned properties to meet the Scottish Housing Quality, work to improve energy efficiency standards, and increase the supply of affordable housing. Improved standards and an increased supply of affordable housing will have a positive impact on health.</p>
<p>Human Rights: Issues and impacts affecting people's human rights such as being treated with dignity and respect, the right to education, the right to respect for private and family life, and the right to free elections.</p>	<p>The setting of an appropriate rent level and other levels of charges within the Housing Revenue Account ensures the necessary budgets and funding is available to deliver the housing service and invest in council owned properties to meet the Scottish Housing Quality, work to improve energy efficiency standards, and increase the supply of affordable housing to meet demand from households in housing need. This will positively impact on human rights.</p> <p>If approved, the decision to retain existing rent charges for all types of homeless temporary accommodation will impact positively on homeless households.</p>

<p>Socio-Economic Disadvantage</p>	<p>Positive and/or Negative Impacts</p>
<p>Low Income/Income Poverty: Issues: cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food and clothing.</p>	<p>Programmed capital investment will lead to improved standards within properties and any measures to improve energy efficiency within the housing stock will have a positive impact for those on a low income or living in income poverty.</p> <p>An increased rent liability may have a negative impact on households who are not in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit housing costs.</p> <p>If approved the decision to retain existing rent charges for all types of homeless temporary accommodation will impact positively on homeless households.</p>
<p>Low and/or no wealth: Issues: enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future</p>	<p>Programmed capital investment will lead to improved standards within properties and any measures to improve energy efficiency within the housing stock will have a positive impact for those with low and/or no wealth.</p> <p>An increased rent liability may have a negative impact on households. However, for those households with low and/or no wealth, advice, information or signposting to apply for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit housing costs would be maximised.</p>

	If approved, the decision to retain existing rent charges for all types of homeless temporary accommodation will impact positively on homeless households.
Material Deprivation: Issues: being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure/hobbies	<p>Programmed capital investment will lead to improved standards within properties and any measures to improve energy efficiency within the housing stock will have a positive impact for those experiencing material deprivation.</p> <p>An increased rent liability may have a negative impact on households. However, for those households with material deprivation, advice, information or signposting to apply for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit housing costs would be maximised.</p> <p>If approved, the decision to retain existing rent charges for all types of homeless temporary accommodation will impact positively on homeless households.</p>
Area Deprivation: Issues: where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of transport)	There are no specific impacts relating to this socio-economic factor.

Section Three: Evidence Used in Developing the Policy

<p>Involvement and Consultation In assessing the impact(s) set out above what evidence has been collected from involvement, engagement or consultation? Who did you involve, when and how?</p>	<p>A Rent Setting Consultation Newsletter was developed in partnership with tenant representatives on the Tenants Monitoring Group. The newsletter included key information to allow tenants to make an informed decision. The Rent Setting Consultation was published on the Council's website and promoted via the Housing Services Facebook page and via a tenant representative podcast. A newsletter was issued to all tenants (7856 in total) and the consultation period was open from 24 November – 20 December 2023. A total of 397 valid votes were registered online or by post, this represented a response rate of 5%. Taking account of the consultation responses and feedback, the lowest level of proposed increase at 4.5% each year for 3 years has been recommended to Council for approval.</p>
<p>Data and Research In assessing the impact set out above what evidence has been collected from research or other data. Please specify what research was carried out or data collected, when and how this was done.</p>	<p>To help develop the consultation material, information was used from data published by the Scottish Housing Regulator and Scotland's Housing Network. The newsletter contained the following information to help tenants make an informed choice:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the background and reason for the consultation, • an overview of the Housing Revenue Account and how rental income is used, • the investment priorities and current commitments – including the proposed level of capital investment over the next 5 years in the region of £195 million, • information on how the Council's rent levels compare with other social landlords and how the previous rent increase applied compares with other local authorities, • information on ways tenants can seek help if they are struggling with rent payments, • information on the considerations around rising costs and the provisions to manage risk within the housing business plan, and • details on each of the rent setting options being presented to tenants for their vote.

<p>Partners data and research In assessing the impact(s) set out in Section 2 what evidence has been provided by partners?</p> <p>Please specify partners</p>	<p>Information on national rent levels is available from data published by the Scottish Housing Regulator and Scotland's Housing Network. This has been used to assess the impact of proposed increases for tenants in comparison to other social housing providers.</p> <p>Information collated for the Annual Return on the Housing Charter is used to inform considerations. In respect of rents, information is available on the number of tenants receiving assistance with housing costs via Housing Benefit or Universal Credit.</p> <p>Following the completion of energy efficiency improvement work, where required, updated Energy Performance Certificates (EPC's) are commissioned to measure the improvement of energy ratings in properties post completion of work. Updated EPC's are provided by the Energy Agency on completion of works or commissioned by the Council through existing contractual arrangements.</p>
<p>Gaps and Uncertainties Have you identified any gaps or uncertainties in your understanding of the issues or impacts that need to be explored further?</p>	<p>There are no specific gaps or uncertainties. Through early intervention and personal contact Housing staff will provide advice, information or signposting services to households who indicate they are struggling to meet their rent payments.</p>

Section Four: Detailed Action Plan to address identified gaps in:

a) evidence and

b) to mitigate negative impacts

No.	Action	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale
1	Deliver planned capital investment programme to improve properties and improve energy efficiency standards.	Service Lead – Housing Services and Service Lead - Professional Design Services	Ongoing
2	Deliver programmes of new build housing to increase the supply of affordable housing	Co-ordinator – Housing Policy & Strategy and Service Lead - Professional Design Services	Ongoing
3	Ensure early intervention and contact takes place with households in rent arrears to provide advice, information, signposting and support to households experiencing hardship or missing rent payments. Maximise the take up of applications for Discretionary Housing Payments to assist households in financial hardship.	Service Lead – Housing Services and Co-ordinator – Housing Revenue, Arrears & Support	Ongoing
4	Where appropriate and with the tenants consent, make referrals to Housing Support Providers (such as Ayr Housing Aid Centre, Quarriers, SeaScape)	Service Lead – Housing Services and	Ongoing

	or the Information and Advice Hub to provide targeted support to households experiencing hardship or missing rent payments.	Co-ordinator – Housing Revenue, Arrears & Support	
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Note: Please add more rows as required.

Section Five - Performance monitoring and reporting

Considering the policy as a whole, including its equality and diversity implications:

When is the policy intended to come into effect?	21 March 2024
When will the policy be reviewed?	The decision is to set rents for a 3 year period from 2024/25 – 2026/27. Following the Council's decision in January 2024, the next rent setting decision would be reviewed and confirmed by Council in January 2027.
Which Panel will have oversight of the policy?	South Ayrshire Council



Section 6

South Ayrshire Council

Appendix 4

Summary Equality Impact Assessment Implications & Mitigating Actions

Name of Policy: Setting of Council House Rents and Other Rents and Charges (2024/25 – 2026/27) and Proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue Budget 2024/25 and Capital Budget (2024/25 – 2028/29)

This policy will assist or inhibit the Council's ability to eliminate discrimination; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations as follows:

<p>Eliminate discrimination</p> <p>The rent setting decision will apply to all secure and short Scottish secure tenants of South Ayrshire Council, it does not disproportionately disadvantage one group or community over another. South Ayrshire Council is committed to eliminating discrimination and stigmatisation through the delivery of housing services to all tenants.</p>
<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p> <p>The rent setting decision applies to all secure and short Scottish secure tenants, this provides funding for the delivery of services which is inclusive and ensures equality of opportunity to access housing services by all protected characteristics within the Council's communities.</p>
<p>Foster good relations</p> <p>The rent setting decision will support the Housing Revenue Account to achieve an income stream that will support the delivery of improvements across the housing stock, improving standards for tenants and fulfilling the commitments agreed in consultation with tenants.</p>
<p>Consider Socio-Economic Disadvantage (Fairer Scotland Duty)</p> <p>While the rent setting decision may have a financial impact on some households, the Council is committed to ensuring that there is early intervention and contact is made with tenants who fall into rent arrears to ensure that appropriate advice, information, housing support or signposting</p>

takes place. Where appropriate advice and support will be provided to maximise the take up of applications for Discretionary Housing Payments to households experiencing financial hardship.

Summary of Key Action to Mitigate Negative Impacts	
Actions	Timescale
See details of actions outlined in Section 4.	

Signed:Michael Alexander - Service Lead – Housing Services
Date:10 January 2024.....