

Protecting what matters

Why collaboration can build our communities



Dumfries and Galloway Council
2026/2029 Budget

Consultation response



THIRD SECTOR
Dumfries and Galloway

Public service, reimagined

What could we do better if we did it together?

We fully recognise the ongoing and sustained pressures facing our council. We've been part of the conversations nationally and regionally about the real-term financial challenges facing the public sector, and about how things could be done differently. For our community and voluntary (third) sector, this pressure is experienced every year, where many have always been in a financially insecure space.

Since coming into post late in 2023, I have been advocating for a change in approach to our sector, with local partners and with Scottish Government, as well as some national funders. We have strong relationships and recognition of our sector in partnership spaces, but we must see action in how those partnerships translate to change in our communities – through Fair Funding, leadership of our community and voluntary sector, more direct investment, genuine collaboration (not consultation), involving our sector in strategic decision making and believing that our sector now needs to be part of the changes proposed. 95% of our Dumfries and Galloway community and voluntary sector are based directly in our communities – they hold the trusted relationships that are so hard to build in other sectors. We recognise our sector will have to make some changes too.

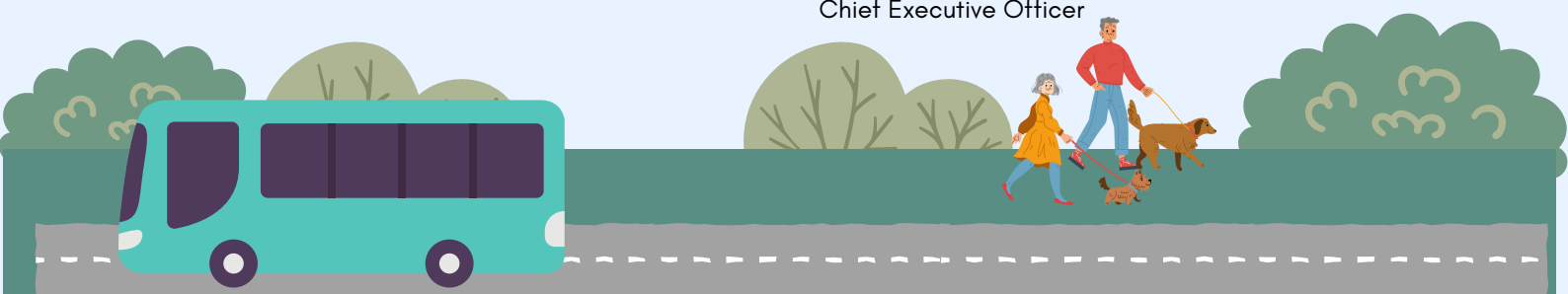
The latest national strategies, including Public Service Reform and the new Population Health Framework, clearly set out a role for the community and voluntary sector, and importantly for the communities to which they belong. We must be realistic that achieving our shared ambitions requires doing things differently. For us, that means investing in our sector to take the lead where we're best placed. Stronger communities, enabled and supported by quality public services. Having shared focus on outcomes and impact rather than activity. Not needing everything to be done the same way across every community, building on strengths. Enabling local change and leadership, not always owning and controlling it. We must take this opportunity to create the conditions for that future.

The Christie Commission recommendations are 14 years old. We haven't changed much since then. Those were the times for reform. Now, we feel, reform isn't enough. Now is the time for investing in what works, not simply protecting what we have. It's time for **reimagining public service**. It will take leadership, along with intention, ambition and courage. Making such huge decisions isn't easy, but it's what we should be accountable for. If we do it together, we're much more likely to achieve our ambitions for a healthy and thriving Dumfries and Galloway.



Alan Webb

Chief Executive Officer



Our sector in Dumfries and Galloway

2,000

community and voluntary
sector organisations

£171m

min estimated annual income

95%

of our sector are
local organisations

65%

of our sector is
based in rural areas*

2,100

people are employed
in the sector

25,000

adults formally volunteer



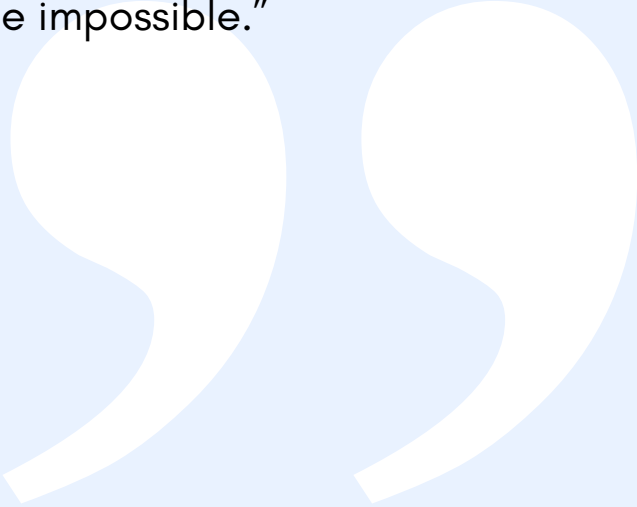


“We need to progress collectively, based on a shared understanding, shared ambition and an honest conversation about the reality of living within our means, now and in the future. We must be willing to change behaviours. To sacrifice, organisationally and individually, for the greater good, to leave institutional thinking behind, to become whole place and whole system (and not just talk about it). To avoid language that divides, that prioritises without an honest understanding of wider system harm, to engage with all people about what the future truly looks like, for communities, families, children.

None of this can be achieved unless we challenge and change our behaviours—not our resources, as if we had much choice about that anyway. There is little point in wishing for the impossible.”

Des Murray, Chair Solace Scotland

TheMJ, [Making reform in Scotland the real thing](#), August 2025



Working together, a new way

Community relationships are not just nice to have, but the foundation of resilience and impact. The connections between council, community and voluntary sector, and local communities are central to sustaining wellbeing, tackling inequalities, and keeping essential supports and services within reach for all.

We have many partnerships, and many examples of services and different parts of the system working together. However, in the main, calls for reform are still limiting, and in many ways are too late. We believe the whole approach needs to be **reimagined**.

Reimagine partnership

- Being at the table together is no longer enough. Removing the organisational lines that can stop genuine collaboration and making shared commitments together requires attention.
- We believe we should explore collective leadership and collaboration over partnership working. Our shared skills, insights, resources and planning can avoid duplication and secure maximum impact. It must also be delivered throughout our organisations, not just in leadership meetings.
- We cannot change the different organisation governance arrangements overnight, but they shouldn't block change. Those with the power can make collaborative and collective working happen.

Reimagine Community Planning

- Community planning should have greater focus on shared outcomes and impact, and focus specifically on the things we can do better together.
- Tackling inequity is all of our responsibility, it's a key purpose of the Partnership and should be the driver for our prioritisation of resources.
- We should develop targeted and focussed shared plans that reflect our collective ambition for change.

Reimagine communities as collaborators and leaders, not just recipients or consultees

- Communities in Dumfries and Galloway are proactive, resourceful, and keen to make a difference. When enabled and supported, they take ownership of local assets, deliver essential supports, and provide vital care and connection through trusted relationships.
- The council's budget process should see communities, and community and voluntary organisations as strategic collaborators, able to own and lead, not just as mechanisms to deliver council priorities. We must move power and agency back to people and communities.
- Our developing DGCollective and InvestDG concepts are designed to help our sector and communities take the lead, collaborate on shared outcomes for people, place and policy and also attract long-term external investment into our communities. www.dgcollective.org.uk

Reimagine community investment

- Bringing community funds together to a single Community Investment Fund will help maximise the use of discretionary grants, ensure they are invested in shared priorities and improve the quality of data and impact.
- Applying the CPIB Fair Funding approach is essential for all partners, especially for local government.

The budget proposals

We have provided our views on relevant proposals contained within the budget consultation documents. We have encouraged organisations across the sector to make their own individual submissions as appropriate, specifically in their own community and operating context. A significant disappointment to note is the lack of impact assessments published for the consultation. We are unclear as to how stakeholders and the public are able to make informed contributions to the budget process without understanding the impact of each of the proposals.

We have also taken the opportunity to share our views on additional and alternative considerations to help tackle the council budget challenges that will help build sustainable public services across Dumfries and Galloway in the longer term.

For our community and voluntary sector, a key additional pressure is time to change. We need to protect our sector to give time for any redesign. If funding reductions mean closure of community and voluntary sector models of help and support, they won't be recovered – they will be lost to our communities. We need a managed approach.

We all know too well how essential it is to recognise that rural Dumfries and Galloway cannot be treated the same as an urban local authority – the cost of “doing without” local provision is far higher for our dispersed communities. Cuts to small grants, transport links, or very local/neighbourhood models of working may appear modest on paper but can remove the only accessible service for entire communities. A much bigger, longer-term challenge is one of depopulation. Unless we invest in repopulating Dumfries and Galloway, we will simply manage the decline of community agency and infrastructure.

Investment in preventative, community-led activity saves the council money over time and sustains wellbeing. We could go further by nurturing environments that *create* good health, wellbeing and prosperity, not just preventing poor outcomes. Every pound spent locally through a community organisation has a multiplier effect – supporting jobs, volunteering, and local economies.

It's also important not to presume that council services and supports are better. The council must take an open approach to investments, understand where public money is best invested in other ways of working and not simply protect council at the cost of other sectors, jobs and the impacts on communities.

Overall, there are significant risks to withdrawing or reducing investment in our sector:

- **Loss of community capacity:** Small voluntary organisations may not survive further funding cuts, leaving gaps that cannot be filled by statutory services.
- **Increased rural inequality:** Service withdrawal from rural areas disproportionately affects those without transport or digital access, or the resources to build new connections to replace what's lost.
- **Weakened community resilience:** The social infrastructure – trust, collaboration, and volunteering – takes years to build and can be lost quickly.
- **Short-term savings, long-term costs:** When local preventative support disappears, demand rises in health, social care, and crisis services.

The focus for all of us should be **protecting what's good, what matters**. Decisions shouldn't be made based on who designs and delivers supports and services; if they work and have impact then we should protect them. This means being honest about stopping what is not working, even if it's hard to do. It also means the same evaluation standards being applied across public services in any sector – outcomes and impact, not only measuring levels of activity. And it means not extracting from our communities simply as a means to protect the status quo.

Our council is the custodian of vast amounts of public money. As well as a range of statutory services that must be provided, the council has control of what else it invests in. That power must be used for the greatest community and population benefit, including investing public monies directly into communities where that's best. Using a combination of impact evaluation, shared learning from other models, and brave leadership with intention, our council has the power and influence to make change happen. No one wants to manage decline, albeit a simple slicing of budgets can seem the easiest option. Maintaining a less than impactful system and structure, simply because it's what we have, should not be an option.

There are many experiences and models for us to learn from. We won't be the first to try new ways. However, with the right collective intention and leadership, we can lead the way in whole system change that places communities first every time. We urge members to be bold, to lead change, to **reimagine**.

Some experiences and learning includes:

Changing Futures Northumbria – Liberated method

<https://www.changingfuturesnorthumbria.co.uk/the-liberated-method>

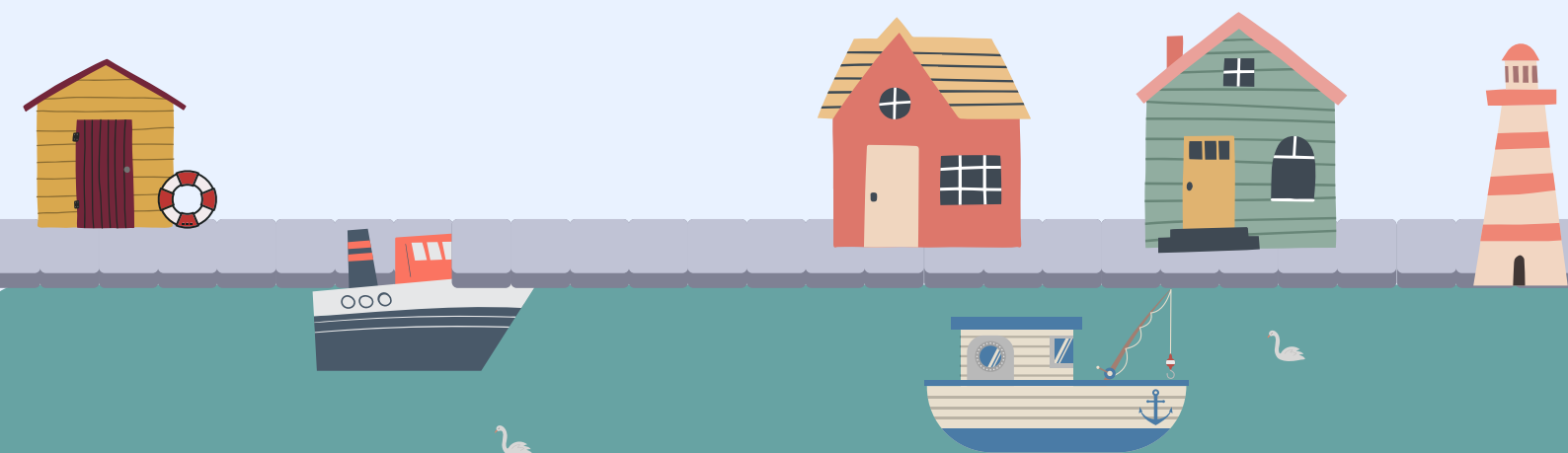
Wigan Deal

<https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/projects/lessons-wigan-deal>

Clackmannanshire Family Wellbeing Partnership

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/evaluation-family-wellbeing-partnership-clackmannanshire/pages/1/>

There are many more experiences to learn from. These are to illustrate that a new way, whichever way we choose, is possible.



Sustained focus of resources on our council Plan Priorities outcomes

1.03

Reduce spending on external Children and Families services in Social Work



We know:

- A. There are at least **60** community and voluntary sector organisations in Dumfries and Galloway with a primary purpose of providing support for children and families, and many more impacting family support through their work.
- B. Demands on social work children's services can be challenging to respond to, given the pressure on workforce and the situation many families face by the time they ask for help.
- C. Evidence shows building a quality, integrated model of family support across sectors works best. For example, in an evaluation of a Glasgow cross-sector programme, 96% of families would recommend the community and voluntary sector approach, and *"most families gain multiple positive outcomes through their engagement with support"*. Further, evidence showed the community and voluntary sector model stopped escalation of most family needs and prevented social work involvement entirely.
- D. A significant volume of the council's family support work is funded through time-limited Scottish Government grants and not core budget. Reducing community and voluntary sector investment at this point risks overall family support infrastructure at a time when community-led support is most needed.
- E. If we are to deliver on The Promise, live the principles of the UNCRC and truly realise integrated approach to Whole Family Support then we need to do this across sectors and together.

We propose:

- A. The council protects the community and voluntary sector budget at least for the upcoming year whilst a new model, and new investment options, can be explored based on evidence of a different way of working.
- B. The council supports exploration and design of a new, integrated model of family support across sectors that could be overseen by the Children's Services Partnership, including models of long-term investment and a focus on outcomes for families.
- C. The council invests £60,000 in a one-year enabling, invest to save budget to allow community and voluntary sector organisations to actively participate in the design of a new integrated model and diversification of funding.
- D. The council recognises that not all families who require support would like this from a statutory service and we must value our community-led family support, as well as formal social work intervention when it's needed. Removing investment in community and voluntary sector support is likely to increase demand and costs to the council overall.



Sustained focus of resources on our council Plan Priorities outcomes

1.07

End funding for
Information and Advice
services provided by
Citizens Advice



We know:

- A. Last year, more than 8,000 people across Dumfries and Galloway received support and advice from this service.
- B. This service helped people with more than £8.6m of debt and supported bringing £9.8m back into households and local economies.
- C. Through new innovations and operating models, the service is committed to reaching everyone who needs support, including new outreach services and making best use of technology for digital support. At the same time, the service was subject to a static budget for many years, a real-terms cut.
- D. In the report on the Scottish Government Child Poverty Plan, the Poverty and Inequalities Commission (2025) made a key recommendation that advice services are essential and called for long-term, secure funding; Better outreach to priority families; Recognition of advice services as a core part of Scotland's anti-poverty infrastructure.
- E. Cost of living, managing debt and navigating systems continue to be challenges for people across the region, often felt more severely in our rural and more disconnected communities, but also for those households facing multiple pressures on household income, poverty and advocating for the rights of their families. Constant national and media conversations around withdrawal of social security and a range of support services being at risk adds to the pressure and makes advice services even more important to our communities.

We propose:

- A. The council recognise the benefits to people across communities, to tackling isolation, poverty and upholding people's rights by investing in adequate advice services. The council further acknowledges the importance of these services being provided independently of the public sector.
- B. The advice service budget is at least protected to maintain its reach and ensure people across Dumfries and Galloway have access to advice and support.
- C. The council makes a further multi-year commitment to independent advice services, with consideration of the economic return for families and local economies in applying an annual uplift to the overall budget. This will help maintain the services, retain staff and allow the services to invest in transformation with confidence.



Sustained focus of resources on our council Plan Priorities outcomes

1.08

End funding for Representation and Engagement services provided by community and voluntary sector groups



We know:

- A. The purpose of engaging the service is to ensure that those with protected characteristics, plus our wider community and voluntary sector, is represented across decision making approaches and is engaged in the work of the council and partners.
- B. During periods of important decision making, the services ensure the voices and experiences of those least likely to be heard are included in impact assessments, service design and delivery and that the council continues to have mechanisms to engage the widest range of community stakeholders as possible.
- C. In their report on the Scottish Government Child Poverty Delivery Plan, the Poverty and Inequalities Commission (2025) recommended that public sector must invest in our community and voluntary sector, specifically: Multi-year funding for proven community and voluntary sector partners; Parity of employment with public sector terms and conditions; Improved access to public assets for community and community and voluntary sector organisations. Whilst the sector continues the direct ask of the Scottish Government, local partners must play their part too.
- D. The council's own strategy on tackling inequalities says the approach to representation and engagement helps the council fulfil its legal, as well as ethical, duties. *"The Commission has strengthened links between all member organisations to maximise positive outcomes for the people they support, allows sharing of good practice across all partners and ensures effective forward planning in relation to representation and engagement activity across all communities in Dumfries and Galloway."*
- E. Each of the services are relatively small charities doing important equalities and rights work across Dumfries and Galloway. This service fund contributes to the core operating budget to ensure these services remain available and withdrawal would have a disproportionate impact. It's accepted that the value of this investment does not meet the full costs of each organisations commitment and scope of work.

We propose:

- A. The council protects this important investment to engage and hear from those across our communities who are least likely to be heard, to uphold rights and ensure the council has an unbiased views of lived and living experience from independent community and voluntary sector organisations.
- B. The council commits to this programme for another 3-year period in line with Fair Funding, and in doing so, asks services to work with council officers to ensure the Representation and Engagement approaches continues to add value, maximise reach and influence policy and decision-making.
- C. The council increases investment in Representation and Engagement with direct links to each department impacted by including those least likely to be heard or involved in individual budgets, therefore maximising the use of expertise across the funded organisations and securing their future capacity to undertake this work well.



Modernise how we deliver some services to meet our outcomes

2.03

Reduce spending on children's direct payment support



We know:

A. The public sector can't always meet needs. The Scottish Government Framework of Standards for such payments places significant emphasis on the importance of early help, family and community support. In particular, it notes *"Children, young people, families, supported people and carers are at the centre of conversations, and are treated as experts in identifying their own needs and what matters to them."*

B. Agency within families to meet their needs on their own terms is hugely important to quality living. Changes like those proposed increases pressures and demands on families, especially those without wider support networks, and on unpaid carers who already give so much against a backdrop of limited help and support.

C. The system should be built on need however seems under-resourced to meet those needs. A 2022 review of SDS by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) showed there were many systemic factors that meant people did not have their needs or outcomes met, from lack of finance and flexibility, to a range of additional controls placed by the local authority. Real experiences include *"Sometimes the care package is designed to suit the budget that's available, rather than the budget being designed to suit the care package."* and *"She was trying to tell me what I could spend the money on, and it took away the respect, dignity and choice that should be around that."*

D. Organisations across the sector have shared with us that decisions about Self Directed Support are already being made and payments to families are being reduced, before this proposal has been fully considered.

We propose:

- A. The council must recognise that agency over support decisions is a key aspect of SDS and to healthy living for families. Reducing these payments are likely to drive even more demand to council services that simply aren't available.
- B. The council engage with the range of care, support and community organisations to consider how best we can collectively meet the needs of, and provide support to, families on their terms.
- C. The council postpone any long-term decision on these payments, removing any proposed savings for the upcoming year, until it fully understands the impact on children and families and has had the opportunity to connect with families and the wider sector on any reforms.



Modernise how we deliver some services to meet our outcomes

2.04

Reduce emergency assistance payments through the council's Children and Families service



We know:

- A. By their very nature, Section 12 and Section 22 payments are urgent and, especially in the case of Section 12 payments, are a last resort.
- B. As Section 22 payments are focussed on children's needs, the suggestion that the budget can be reduced and families redirected to other networks for support is not evidenced. It is unclear from any public reporting how many payments have been made and therefore whether the need exists.
- C. There is a duty to protect and promote welfare in the very same regulations that allow such payments to be made. Members must be confident that any reduction to these budgets does not risk delivery of its duties.
- D. Whilst the level of child and family poverty in Dumfries and Galloway appears to be reducing, we must maintain our investment in helping mitigate the worst effects whilst we make sure that we eliminate children growing up in poverty with local and national action. Still more than 1 in 5 children are growing up in poverty in our communities. Reduction in support for families, assessed as needing support, will hinder any activity and most likely be counter to our collective ambitions.

We propose:

- A. Members must be clear on the impact on children and their families. Knowingly making a decision to remove support from those assessed as needing it without understanding the impact is a risk. Any reductions in payments must be based on evidence that there is no longer need. As there is no impact assessment, it is difficult to understand the potential impact and how many families receive this support each year.
- B. Until such times as the impact, and family experiences, are understood, the council must protect such payments to ensure it meets its duties.



Maximise use of fewer assets, working with and within communities

3.01 – 3.05

Schools and nurseries



We know:

- A. The importance of early learning and schools to our communities is clear by the public response to a range of proposals in recent years to change our school estate, adjust partnership structures and tackle the backlog of maintenance reported to council committees.
- B. Whilst there are requirements for statutory consultation across many of the changes proposed, there is a risk of consultation fatigue.
- C. The wider infrastructure around transport and connectivity, family connections and the relationship between schools and whole families must be considered. Whilst school transport may be a reasonable answer in some cases to children's attendance, it does not help with family engagement and the council's strategies on participation.
- D. The council's own strategy on rural schools says "A lack of resources or declining enrolment should not therefore, in isolation, be viewed as justification for school closure. Indeed, research increasingly calls for a shift away from deficit narratives and towards recognition of the "rural advantage"". The context, therefore, of these budget proposals and lack of reference to these wider strategies is likely to create concern and drive particular consultation responses that may otherwise be better informed by public understanding in the round.
- E. Dumfries and Galloway continues to face pressures in meeting the needs of children who require additional support. Whilst this can be seen around Scotland, the rising demand and reducing resources risk even further meeting the needs of our children, even more so if any provision is further from home.

We propose:

- A. The council must place the highest priority in meeting children's needs, the impact on communities of losing facilities and considers all available options to building spaces rooted in communities for multiple uses, before simply closing facilities through the lens of education alone. One latest example is a model in Clackmannanshire <https://www.healthcaredm.co.uk/uploads/stable/asset/F800F1C9-244F-CEC3-6B4A-BF2988935C13/12/>
- B. The council should fully consider multi-agency, multi-sector local Family Hubs, co-locating a range of family advice, support and community services that would mean at least some learning provision may be maintained in community settings. This may also include re-training or redeployment against some savings proposed in Section 4 of the budget consultation document.
- C. The council should be considerate of consultation fatigue and the need for active community involvement. There is an opportunity to embrace community participation, involvement and leadership in a holistic way shaped around communities, rather than the current approach to consultation on individual aspects of services. There are legal duties, but they do not stop working in a more integrated way.
- D. Tackling depopulation is a significant, medium to long-term consideration that must be part of proposals today. Decisions to close schools will have significant impacts on communities and our ability to attract more families to Dumfries and Galloway.



Maximise use of fewer assets, working with and within communities

3.10

Review local services and buildings in each area



We know:

- A. Place-based working is more than having services based in a place. It means involvement of the community and understanding their needs, complementing community assets and strengths with good services, co-working with partners and stakeholders, and shaping power dynamics to be balanced toward community leadership.
- B. Working with place at the centre requires investment of time and resources to get things right. This includes investing to remove barriers to engagement and involvement across communities to ensure the widest possible input, not just those with particular interests.
- C. Dumfries and Galloway has plenty of experience in the development of Place Plans at various levels and with various purposes. Whilst they demonstrate the effort and resources required, there is also learning to be taken about how inclusive they are, how cross-sector and multi-agency supported they are and whether we have the resources to invest in the actions to make them a reality (either by investing existing resources or working together to attract investment). Planning is only the beginning.
- D. There have been reports from community organisations that access to booking spaces, rules around how spaces are used and the cost of booking spaces can be prohibitive.
- E. This proposal should also be seen together with proposal 2025/26 3.06.

We propose:

- A. Council fully consider a focus on creating community spaces, incorporating education, learning, community activity/action and community specific spaces, co-developed in a place-based way of working.
- B. Council should consider early investment of some of the proposed savings in this section to invest in others to ensure their participation, inclusive approaches for community involvement and leadership and the re-design of some third and community sector services/support models. These can still be expected to realise savings for the future, perhaps re-phased from the proposal, and create opportunities for external investment.
- C. Council implement a new community-friendly fee model, seeing charges for usage not as income, but rather as an investment in community involvement and wellbeing. Many groups expect to pay a fee for facilities to be maintained and staffed.
- D. Aligned with proposal 2025/26 3.06, explore a mixed model of council ownership and community leadership.



Savings options previously subject to public consultation

25/26

1.06

End funding for all
Tackling Poverty and
cost of living projects



We know:

- A. Dumfries and Galloway continues to face challenges of poverty, inequity and isolation.
- B. Poverty in rural areas can often be hidden by top-level SIMD data alone and there are particular experiences of living in poverty in rural communities, including higher bills for shopping and fuel, costs of (or lack of) transport, access to work and lower wages.
- C. This budget is invested in a range of areas, including community transport, access to food, energy and fuel support and the council's own discretionary funds.
- D. As an example, this fund has allowed over 1,000 community transport journey's last year, 79% of people using the service are over 65, 13% of journeys travelling out of region and 87% travelling in region. This at a time when public transport has been reduced or removed for some communities following the recent bus procurement exercise.
- E. Community investment to tackle the impacts of poverty can be spread thinly even within this overall budget. This means that much of the investment is in mitigations of the worst experiences and more investment is needed overall.

We propose:

- A. The council should protect this much-needed investment in tackling poverty and inequalities across Dumfries and Galloway to help maintain the community structures and supports that have been created and are relied on.
- B. The council should commit investment on a multi-year basis, allowing a baseline from which the various community services can build wider investment plans in the knowledge that council investment is secure.
- C. The council recognise that a significant element of this investment is focussed on mitigating the worst experiences, and other projects are building essential supports and services. Whilst council has directed a new approach to evaluation, proposals should be invited from each of the projects on what long-term investment would be required to join-up resources, and how we might bring various funding streams together to tackle poverty in Dumfries and Galloway.



Savings options previously subject to public consultation

25/26

3.06

Close or transfer remaining council-run community halls



We know:

A. For all communities, but especially those in many rural settings, maintaining places to go is hugely important for wellbeing, connections and retaining a sense of place and togetherness.

B. In the report *Where People Meet*, the challenges of maintaining community spaces is fully recognised as is the importance of creating sustainable thriving spaces. There are calls for community centres to be recognised as national infrastructure by Governments. *"...community spaces are in decline, and have been for years. This deterioration is unravelling our social fabric, weakening the strength of community"*

https://www.newlocal.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Where-People-Meet_FINAL-website.pdf

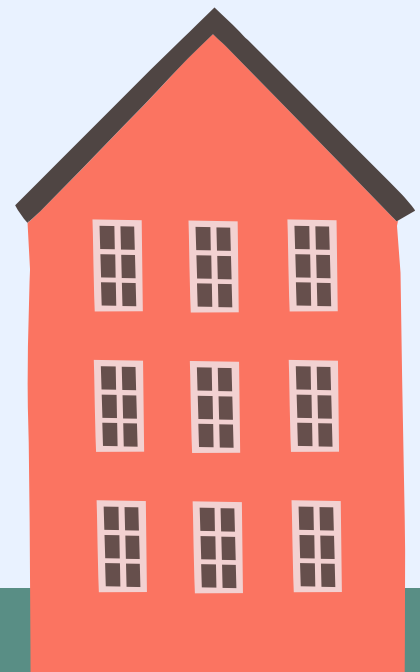
C. The latest review of Community Asset Transfer by the Scottish Government highlighted the complexity of the process and the resources (by council and communities) required over an extended period.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/findings-report-review-asset-transfer-part-5-community-empowerment-scotland-act-2015/pages/5/>

D. Recently, community organisations have been cautioned about asset transfer without long-term planning and sustainability, ensuring the sector does not allow hope and energy for community spaces to overshadow the practicalities of owning and maintaining them <https://tfn.scot/news/community-groups-urged-not-to-be-caught-out-by-costs-in-building-ownership-deals>

We propose:

- A. The council formally recognises community halls as essential community infrastructure and the importance of community spaces for wellbeing, connectivity, cohesion and local economies.
- B. The council consider all options for community operation and leadership, without transferring ownership, and work with communities on long-term planning for community spaces. Where CAT is applied, the council should reduce the requirements to the minimum required to allow more community interest and ensure the strategy is enabling, rather than hindering, more community action.
- C. The council reconsider its approach to legal fees and charges and take a more balanced approach to the costs involved in CAT and other community leadership models.
- D. The council works across sectors and with partners to build a region-wide model of community spaces, aligned to priorities on Place Based Working set out in proposal 3.10. There are examples of building sustainable spaces, led by the sector, in the Scottish Borders <https://borderscommunityaction.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/SB-Village-Halls-Evaluation-Final.pdf>. Combined with proposal 3.10, council should create a fund to rebuild the community spaces network/forum, led by the community and voluntary sector, to come together and explore the future sustainability of community halls and other spaces with a long-term outlook on resources and savings.



What else should be considered

NP 1

Removing duplication with more formal collaborations to deliver outcomes



We propose:

- A. The council commit to working with partners across the NHS and community and voluntary sector on annual community working plans, meaning our collective resources working alongside communities are put to best use, we remove duplication and have a more streamlined and collective offer for our communities.
- B. The council considers, along with partners, to take a collective approach to promoting, supporting and recognising volunteering across Dumfries and Galloway. With each public service, along with our community and voluntary sector, maintaining their own strategies, there is potential to miss the collective efforts we can make to energise and recognise volunteering as essential infrastructure, supporting citizenship and a route to improved health and wellbeing.
- C. The council should revisit the scope of proposal 2.06 to be expanded to consider shared activities across sectors that make best use of our collective resources, not only in shared corporate public services.

What else should be considered

NP 2

Invest in Communities Fund



We propose:

- A. A bringing together of all discretionary funds for communities to a single fund, focussed on top priorities for our communities, reducing duplication, with multi-level investments for different sized groups and organisations. This could increase accessibility, provide a single funding platform, demonstrate better value for public investment and create a collective picture of community action and impact across Dumfries and Galloway.
- B. Remove restrictions on funding that don't add value. For example, investing in community priorities but then adding requirements for match funding, or being too restrictive on what costs can and can't be covered, isn't in line with Fair Funding nor much of the changes we have seen in investment practice across our sector.
- C. As part of a new collective fund, council create a specific work stream focussing on collaborating for prevention, where community and voluntary sector organisations working in this space can collaborate, improve data, learning and impact to evidence models of 'creation and prevention' in our communities.
- D. Building a collective fund becomes more attractive for external investors to contribute in the long term, aligned to our InvestDG concept that's developing. This approach happens elsewhere, including in Edinburgh with its decade-long community investment programme supported by local public services and a range of external investors. <https://regenerativefuturesfund.org.uk>

What else should be considered

NP 3

Joint investment bids
with the community
and voluntary sector /
communities



We propose:

- A. Restricting our ambitions for Dumfries and Galloway based on the council's resources alone is limiting potential. We propose that the council works with other partners to build collective investment proposals for Dumfries and Galloway to attract more external investment in our communities, wider than large-scale capital projects (they are important too).
- B. Council set a clear direction that any investment applications for our communities is collective across sectors where appropriate, but at the very least has input from across our sectors to maximise benefit and impact.
- C. Council support a model for collective leadership, principles and outcomes, meaning that our key partners can represent our collaborative and collective interests in external and national environments, whilst still navigating local governance complexities.
- D. Support is given to more power and agency for communities to design their own priorities – meaning a move from blanket region-wide solutions to community-led, community-responsive, place-based actions which are more relevant and sustainable.

In summary

The range of proposals overall demonstrate the pressures facing our local public sector services. We fully appreciate that this means some challenging decisions will be made, however it is our overall view that the proposals are unbalanced as a set of collective approaches and include areas that the public may expect already happen without budget decision and direction – efficiency savings in-year, for example, as shown in proposals 2.11 and 5.09. Other than for education, the proposals appear to favour reduction in public services rather than a remodelling of our council to face the pressures, whether that's the intention or not. In short, we don't believe the proposals present the cohesive and holistic plan that's needed.

There are some proposals that are not directly within our scope of work and we have therefore not set out a position or proposal, however they do cause concern. Moving towards a digital/digitally enabled and accessed council means members should be clear on the level of investment in digital skills and connectivity needed so as not to risk creating a barrier between people and council. Proposals to reduce Lifelong Learning resources appear to limit opportunities, especially following a successful CLD inspection, however there is no impact information to make an informed assessment.

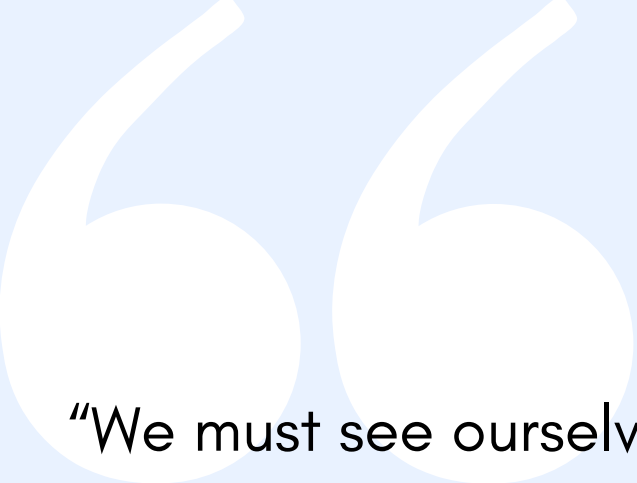
We urge members to call for more detailed impact information on the effect of proposals on communities and to see models of alternative ways of working and of delivering services. All options for savings and income must be on the table, including working with partners to attract more investment to our communities and shaping the size of the council accordingly.

Where there are reductions or defunding of our sector included in proposals, it risks jobs, local infrastructure and support for people across our part of Scotland. Whilst there are real pressures on public finances, council should not be considering dismantling important community infrastructure and deleting community-based jobs, especially when impacts and alternatives have not been considered.

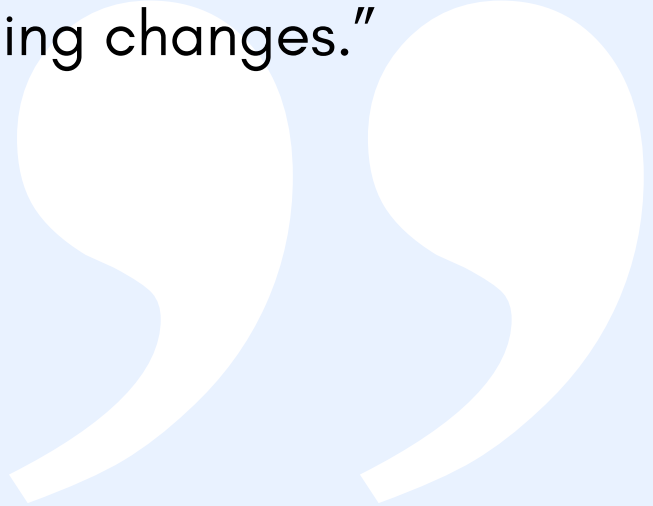
We would have welcomed the opportunity to work together in advance of budget proposals, however we continue to make the offer of working more closely with council to remove duplication, collaborate to achieve outcomes, to work together to attract more community investment to Dumfries and Galloway and to protect, enable and restore power and agency to our communities.

All of this, we suggest, means being bold in decisions, being willing to let communities take the lead and reimagining public service as an enabling action and not an institution to preserve.





“We must see ourselves as citizens – people who actively shape the world around us, who cultivate meaningful connections to their community and institutions, who can imagine a different and better life, who care and take responsibility, and who create opportunities for others to do the same. Crucially, our institutions must also see people as citizens and treat us as such. When they do, everything changes.”



Citizens, Jon Alexander, Ariane Conrad



Third Sector, Dumfries and Galloway is the operating name of Dumfries and Galloway Third Sector Interface, a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC043832, funded with support from the Scottish Government, Dumfries and Galloway Council and Dumfries and Galloway Health and Social Care Partnership. We are a Living Wage, Disability Confident Committed and Fair Work employer and commit to Scotland's Fair Work principles.