

LEADER & LEAD COUNCILLOR REPORTS

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report outlines the arrangements for regular update reports by the Leader of the Council and Lead Councillors in relation to activities undertaken within these roles to support the achievement of shared strategic priorities.
- 1.2 The reports will take the form of an update report to Council which will feature either a quarterly update from the Council Leader or an update from Lead Councillors.
- 1.3 This report includes an update from the Leader of the Council for the period October to December 2012.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Council notes the report.

3. DETAILS

- 3.1 Historically, the Leader of Argyll and Bute Council provided a monthly update report to the Executive Committee of the Council providing detail on key meetings and developments. At the Council meeting on 28th June 2012 it was agreed to discontinue the Executive Committee and while all previously delegated powers have reverted to Council it is important to build on positive communication practices and continue to facilitate engagement with the Leader and Lead Councillors across the full spectrum of Councillors on key issues and developments.
- 3.2 Therefore in order to share knowledge and enhance visibility in relation to activities undertaken by the Leader of the Council and Lead Councillors within these leadership roles, regular update reports will be presented to Council as follows:

Council Leader Report – Quarterly Report - Dec/March/June/Sept
Lead Councillors -Update Report(2 per year)-Jan/Apr/May/Aug/Oct/Nov

Reports from 3 or 4 individual Lead Councillors will be incorporated into one report with a similar format to the Leaders Report to facilitate alignment and reporting against shared strategic priorities.

- 3.3 In adopting this approach the reports will provide a high-level overview of key Council leadership activities undertaken in support of agreed corporate objectives and strategic priorities and provide an overview on significant developments, meetings and initiatives which impact on the Council and the wider landscape for local government and partner organisations in Scotland.

- 3.4 The reports will provide a high level overview; however, details of meeting agendas and supporting documentation, e.g. COSLA, can be made available to Elected Members through the Leadership Support Officer. Specific details on key priorities will continue to be reported through the Council and Committee reporting processes.

4. LEADER'S REPORT

5. *Working Together to improve the potential of our people*

- 5.1 The public consultation to gather views on the potential sites for the new Campbelltown Grammar School began on the 7th November and is now complete following a number of open days and public events. The feedback received from this, together with the results of the options appraisal exercise, will allow plans for the new school, on its selected site to move forward. The estimated cost of the new school is around £13million.

An initial business case is also being developed for the replacement of Oban High School. Once approved by Council, this will allow options for the preferred location of the new facility to be investigated and a preferred site identified. The estimated cost of the new school is between £25 and £30million.

These are both key developments in our schools estate strategy in ensuring we have the right environment to support our young people to accumulate the skills, attitudes and achievements to succeed throughout their lives.

- 5.2 Council will be aware that through successful partnership working and procurement across Local Authorities our Resources Services within Children and Families Services have been involved in the introduction of a national Secure Care Contract. Secure care is a specialist type of care which provides a safe and secure residential environment for young people who require care for their own safety and for those who present a risk to others. This framework agreement will run until July 2013 and therefore through the COSLA Leaders group we are progressing discussions for retendering of this contract to benefit from a collaborative approach and support our aims to improve outcomes for children and young people.

6 *Working together to improve the potential of our communities*

- 6.1 Through the COSLA Leaders Forum we are also continuing to discuss issues associated with Health and Social Care Integration. Further formal public consultation on the draft Bill is unlikely and while we are discussing the best way to engage with the Scottish Government prior to the drafting of the Bill it is important to work collectively on exploring alternative models of delivery which satisfy the key criteria of joint accountability, integrated resources, joint, outcomes and appropriate linkages to community planning. We are also continuing dialogue with NHS Highland in identifying a way forward and developing local solutions. Given the unique challenges which characterise our area it is essential these are fully taken into account as the integration process develops.
- 6.2 The Scottish Government launched 'Opportunities for All' to assist young people in making a positive and sustained transition post-16. This policy makes a commitment to offer a place in learning or training for every 16 – 19 year old not currently in employment, education or training. In support of this the Council hosted the Rural Skills and Employment Summit in the Corran Halls, Oban on 5th November 2012. In attendance at the event were key business people from Argyll

and Bute, community planning partners, further and higher education representatives, training providers, elected members from the Council and Government and young people from the area, along with delegates from other rural authorities. Keynote speakers included Richard Lochhead, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment, and Angela Constance, Minister for Youth Employment.

Locally, Community Planning Partners have developed an Argyll and Bute Skills Pipeline which maps the current resources, help and support available to young people and employers to prevent disengagement and to encourage young people to move forward and progress in the workplace. To support the skills pipeline and Opportunities for All, a draft of the Argyll and Bute Youth Employment Action Plan was shared with delegates and feedback sought. Through collaborative discussion we gathered robust information on and identified specific actions that address:-

- the barriers that young people face to secure and sustain employment opportunities across Argyll and Bute.
- the skills and qualifications employers require young people to have in order to access local employment opportunities
- the advice, help and support employers would like to receive in order for them to support young people in local employment opportunities
- the local labour market opportunities that are currently available to young people and what will be the growth sectors over the next 3 – 5 years.

The event was well reported and well received and the information gained and knowledge shared through this process will support us in taking forward our future plans and strategy in this area.

6.3 As a Council it is critical that we work in close partnership with authorities which face similar challenges (either in the Highlands or with island/sparsity issues) to work jointly on issues which impact on our local communities. Participation in the Convention of the Highlands and Islands supports this and in addition we attend the Highlands and Islands Conveners meetings to optimise our joint-working opportunities prior to COSLA Leaders meetings. This approach is helpful in working collaboratively on issues such as:-

- maintaining pressure on OFCOM to increase Scottish broadband coverage,
- exploring opportunities for using resources from the next round of the European Union Northern Periphery Programme to support potential activity in relation to Health Care and Life Sciences,
- maximising participation of all areas in COHI in the Year of Natural Scotland 2013.

6.4 The Convention has also been lobbying the UK government in respect of Emergency Towing Vehicles with the aim of restoring the same level of protection as had previously been provided. Future agenda items will include looking at the plans for a proposed rural Parliament.

7. *Working together to realise the potential of our area*

7.1 Engagement with the business community during this quarter has included attendance at the AGM of Federation of Small Businesses and the Association of Scottish Shellfish Growers Annual Conference in Oban. The Scottish Shellfish industry provides important employment opportunities and is vital to our economy.

I was therefore delighted to provide support by delivering the opening speech to the Conference. The industry in Scotland has grown significantly in recent years and now accounts for sales of nearly £10 million, with great potential for further development.

7.2 We are also working in partnership with Oban Community Council, Highland Council and Visit Scotland, with some input from HIE, to look at options to maximise the potential of the cruise sector with the purpose of stimulating the local economy and therefore we are focusing on improvements in services and facilities within Oban. At a meeting in Oban on the 9th November, a number of actions were proposed:-

- To look at opportunities for working with Argyll and the Isles Tourism Ltd for marketing and promotion purposes
- To seek further market intelligence from Visit Scotland
- Identify cruise ship bookings
- Identify length of stay of cruise ships in Argyll ports and identify the routes which the excursions take.

The Council is a member of Cruise Scotland which has just been named 'Destination of the Year' at the prestigious Seatrade Insider Cruise Awards 2012 hosted in France which indicates the potential for growth in this area and highlights the importance of improving facilities.

7.3 At a recent Argyll and Bute Renewable Alliance continue to drive forward the development of important work in line with the aims of our Renewable Energy Action Plan. The work of the Alliance is very well supported at a high level by representatives from Scottish Government, HIE, Crown Estate, Developers (including Scottish Power Renewables and SSE), Skills Development Scotland and Marine Scotland.

Items that have been discussed at the last two of these meetings include:-

- Wave and tidal power
- Wind farms on and off shore
- Crown Estate policy
- Community benefit opportunities
- Transmission
- Current Developments
- Local information events
- Energy market
- Skills requirement and development

The Renewable Energy agenda is ambitious, however through strong community engagement and a commitment to effective partnership working, we are making significant progress and as such, the Council will take the lead in this area to progress agreed outcomes on behalf of the Convention of Highlands and Islands.

7.4 Positive developments are taking place in relation to some of our iconic buildings across Argyll and Bute and it was welcome news that the regeneration of Rothesay Pavilion has received initial support for a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid of £2.7m, including development funding of £103,100.

These types of projects are very important to us in acknowledging our past and seeking to protect our built heritage, while building a viable future, and we will continue to create opportunities to support the vision for new and sustainable use

of such buildings to benefit local communities.

8. Working together to improve the potential of our organisation

- 8.1** In my leadership role I have been working closely with the Chief Executive, Senior Management Team and Lead Councillors on finalising the Corporate Plan prior to going forward for approval by Council. This is the first plan within the life of the new administration and it seeks to build on previous successes and ensure we continue to have the foundations in place to deliver an ambitious agenda of change and improvement which benefit our local communities.
- 8.2** As a Council we are committed to challenging and improving our performance and this will be supported by the Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee. I am therefore pleased to confirm the recent appointment of Ian Ross as an independent member of the Committee who will bring a wealth of experience and insight to the role.

9 Additional Highlights

- 9.1** As keynote speaker at a recent Community Land Scotland event in relation to Community Land Ownership in Argyll & Bute it was an opportunity to highlight the positive actions being taken by the Council to develop policies and processes which complement legislative change whilst optimising the opportunities for this area including:-

- a partnership approach to the development our Economic Development Action Plan to – ‘promote social enterprise and community driven local economic development’
- the development of our Renewable Energy Action Plan and Community Renewables Opportunity Plan which will help communities to realise renewable energy aspirations
- our Third Sector Asset Transfer Policy which was approved by Council in September 2012

This was an excellent opportunity to outline our commitment, underpinned by a transparent and positive process, to enable appropriate Council property assets to be transferred to Third Sector organisations, where a sustainable opportunity is considered to exist. The policy supports the development and role of the Third Sector to provide key services within communities as well as community empowerment and the event participants were interested to note that the policy would be officially launched in the New Year, with the involvement of support agencies (HIE Community Land Unit, Development Trust Association Scotland, Scottish Gov, Big Lottery Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund and others).

10 Forthcoming Activities

- 10.1** This has been a challenging period since May in establishing and leading a new administration and ensuring the Council remains focused on achieving our shared vision in “realising our potential together”. I would thank everyone, council employees, all elected members and colleagues in partner organisations for their contribution and support.
- 10.2** Looking ahead to 2013 we will be commencing consultation on the revised Local Development Plan and on the budget plans for 2013/14. There is no doubt that the financial situation will present significant challenge in ensuring we continue to

provide critical services which benefit our local communities and will require us to approach this process both pragmatically and innovatively, and with a clear focus on our agreed aims.

- 10.3** As we approach the festive season I also wish to acknowledge and say thanks for the good work of all council staff, many of whom I appreciate will still be working and providing a valued service over the Christmas and New Year period. I wish everyone a happy and healthy festive season and look forward to us progressing together with an ambitious programme of service delivery and transformation in the New Year

Roddy McCuish
Council Leader