

REPORT BY DEPUTE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND POLICY LEAD FOR ROADS AND AMENITY SERVICES, INFRASTRUCTURE, ASSET MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGIC PROJECTS.

1 DEPUTE LEADER

- 1.1** Much of my focus as Depute Leader has been on securing the continuation of a stable and focussed administration with clear objectives and agreed priorities so that the Audit Commission has no need in the future to describe us as “fragile”. We are making good progress in relation to this both formally through seminars, training, etc and also through informal meetings and discussions. I have also taken part in a number of meetings with senior politicians outwith the Council, including Michael Russell, the Cabinet Secretary for Education, in his capacity as local MSP, and with Alastair Carmichael, the Secretary of State for Scotland.

I think these meetings are helpful in allowing the Leader and me to promote the issues important to Argyll & Bute and highlight issues of significance. For example we were able to explain to both politicians our aspirations for the economy of the area and interest them in some of the detail around the economic summit to be held in October. I hope that either or both of them will be able to bring their significant influence to assist us in ensuring that the summit is meaningful and produces quantifiable outcomes.

In April I attended the Convention of Highlands and Islands, which met in Arran on this occasion. It was interesting to see how other authorities were tackling many of the same issues we are faced with and I again took the opportunity to highlight our concerns with the senior politicians present, in particular with the Minister for Local Government Derek MacKay.

I have also attended the COSLA Convention as well as taking part in meetings with other bodies such as Calmac, Babcock's, Helensburgh Chamber of Commerce and the EJCC, and again I have found these important in ensuring that the Council and different partner organisations are working in cooperation not in competition. I found the recent meeting with Scottish Enterprise particularly important as we were able to focus very clearly on our growth agenda and identify a number of key areas where we felt that SE could assist us in delivering that agenda.

2 POLICY LEAD FOR ROADS AND AMENITY SERVICES, INFRASTRUCTURE, ASSET MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGIC PROJECTS.

2.1 CHORD

The delivery of the CHORD projects continues to be an important piece of work for our Council. I have summarised, below, up-dates for each of the CHORD towns.

2.1.1 Oban

Work continues with officers and OLI Elected Members to deliver the Oban CHORD projects. With the agreement of the desired outcomes now in place, planning consent for phase 1 of Oban CHORD street works and the creation of the North pier visitor facility has now been approved by the PPSL committee. Consent is expected shortly for phase 2 of the street works.

The full business cases for these projects have been approved by OLI members for consideration at today's Council meeting. Discussions are also ongoing with Oban Bay Marine to progress the step ashore and transit marina facility and a report on this matter will be presented to members in due course.

2.1.2 Rothesay

Rothesay Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) work continues with a number of significant projects that are starting to make a real difference on the ground. This THI has been very well received by the community and all the money has now been committed to improving the town's built heritage.

Work also continues on the proposed refurbishment of the Rothesay Pavilion to create a cultural and community hub. I have taken part in a number of site visits here and spoken to key stakeholders involved in the process to ensure local people's aspirations are realised as part of this investment. The funding of this project remains complex and challenging; a large number of different funders are required to make the project a reality. That said, in recent months the building has received positive stage 1 passes from both the Scottish Government's Regional Capital Grants Fund (£900k) and the Coastal Communities Fund (£600k). Applications are shortly to be submitted for stage 2 funding bids and discussions are ongoing with the Heritage Lottery Fund and HIE to bring in other funding. Given the deteriorating condition of the building it has also been necessary to undertake essential repairs to its fabric to allow it to remain operational as we deliver a project that has great potential to make a significant improvement to Rothesay's economy.

2.1.3 Dunoon

In Dunoon, I have taken part in a number of discussions to assist the implementation of the refurbishment of the Queens Hall. The building has now had its detailed design approved, including enhanced public realm works, and the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) is now underway, following Council approval. It is intended that the Queens Hall will provide

a modern venue that supports learning, skills development and wellbeing. I feel that we now have a very focussed deliverable plan for the Hall and the area around it and am confident that it will bring significant benefit to the town.

Whilst not a CHORD funded project, progress has also been made in connection with Dunoon's wooden pier with approval of £350k from the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund (RCGF). The project has also been refocused on making sure the structure of the pier is improved before we move forward in securing new uses for the Pier buildings.

2.1.4 Campbeltown

In Campbeltown, a number of projects are being progressed with all of the THI money now fully committed. It is hoped that work on the former Campbeltown Town Hall and 50 Main Street will soon be starting. It is pleasing to note the changes the CHORD project and other Council funding has made to the townscape of Campbeltown and it is hoped that this will assist with turning around the economic fortunes of the town as well as the wider Kintyre area.

The Campbeltown berthing facility has also had its full business case approved and the tendering exercise is now underway.

2.1.5 Helensburgh

In Helensburgh I am pleased to note that the public realm works are nearing completion for phases 1 and 2. This has made a transformational change to this part of Helensburgh's town centre with work now started on the final phases. While there is a sense of frustration in the time it has taken to complete these phases, the quality of the work has been very high and I hope this will continue as we look to complete the works as quickly as possible. However one issue of concern to me is our ability to maintain the new pavements and I am actively pursuing that matter with officers. Work on the new Council Offices/Civic Centre continues to progress well and I am also looking forward to moving ahead with the refurbishment of the Helensburgh Pier and the creation of a new leisure centre/swimming pool. Recruitment for a new project officer for this is underway and I expect an appointment shortly.

2.2 The Lorn Arc project - TIF

Final approval for the implementation of the Lorn Arc project has been given by the Scottish Government. An Officer has been appointed to take the development work forward. This is an important project, not only for Lorn but also for the whole of Argyll and Bute, with discussions now taking place with interested parties on possible investments associated with the Lorn Arc and the approved business case. The governance of the project will be important and a report will be coming to members before the end of the year with the first works aiming to be on site before April of next year.

2.3 Roads and Amenity Services

2.3.1 Co-mingled Waste Collection

The Contract Variation between the Council, Shanks and the contract funders has now been signed. This allows the co-mingled collections to commence at households in the Oban, Lorn and Mid Argyll areas from 27 October this year and in Cowal from April next year. This service will provide an enhanced kerbside recycling collection from households. Information packs are being posted out to some 13,000 households from Monday 22 September, member briefing sessions have taken place and a robust communications plan is in place to ensure the roll out of this service takes place smoothly, as it did in the Helensburgh & Lomond area a few years ago.

2.3.2 Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE)

Scottish Statutory Instruments came into place on 12th May this year and, following a four week period of issuing warning notices, we started to issue Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) in June. The recently appointed wardens seem to be settling in well to their new roles and arrangements will be made for them to come to Area Committees to meet local Members where Members wish that to happen. Officers are also arranging Member workshops over the autumn/winter period to allow the existing Traffic Regulation Orders to be reviewed and, where required, amended in line with the Council's new Parking Policy. This will be a significant amount of work for Members and officers to ensure that the review meets the needs of the local areas and it will be important that there are robust arrangements in place for engaging with the local communities.

2.3.3 Street Lighting

Good progress is being made on the lighting inventory assessment with a detailed on-site survey of all street lighting being undertaken to gather information relating to; type of Lamp (light source), type of lantern (bulb holder), control box, cut out (trip switch), column condition, cable type and condition and the point of control (electrical supply)

Scottish Government has made an allocation of £43,000 to allow the Council to take forward aspects of Scotland's ambitious climate change targets in relation to street lighting. The Council topped up the allocation to a total of £200,000.

This funding is being used to develop, in partnership with Scottish Futures Trust, a full business case and implementation plan for the replacement of current street lighting with more energy efficient alternatives.

A high proportion of the stock is in a poor condition, 50% is estimated to be in need of replacement either because of the condition of the column or cabling. The existing model for energy costs relies on estimates. This will be updated, based on the inventory, to ensure that energy costs are accurately calculated.

Scottish Futures Trust has developed an options appraisal model. This model will be populated with the inventory data and form the basis of the business case for the replacement of street lighting.

That business case will be reported to the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee on completion.

2.3.4 A83 and A82 – Transport Scotland Seminar

Officials from Transport Scotland addressed an audience of Elected Members and Stakeholders on Monday 8th September in the Council Chamber. The seminar covered an update on the A83 and the A82. Transport Scotland presentations focused on the resilience of the A83, the works completed and the works proposed. The seminar also covered the proposed improvement works on the A82 between Tarbet and Inverarnan and how the design of these works would need to ensure that they could be built in such a way that the route could be easily returned to service in the event of the A83 not being available.

The seminar also noted that there had been more issues recently with road closures following road traffic collisions than landslips. This issue has already been identified as a priority in the Single Outcome Agreement and the Local Policing Plan 2014 – 17 report, tabled at the recent PRS Committee, has highlighted that key priorities to tackle road safety and enforcement issues will be:

- *To work with partners to develop a strategy to reduce the numbers of those killed and seriously injured on the Argyll and Bute road network.*
- *To increase enforcement activity to improve driver behaviour.*
- *To improve road safety through enhanced partnership working and preventative initiatives within the community.*

The Fire and Rescue Service have also highlighted that Road Safety remains a concern for all partners across Argyll & Bute and will continue to focus the attention of all emergency services. This year so far has seen an increase in activity with regard to Road Traffic Collisions and they will continue their efforts to provide information and education to everyone who lives, works and visits Argyll & Bute.

It is therefore critical that we continue to work closely with all our partners to not only improve the roads infrastructure but also to improve road safety.

2.3.5 Council Road Improvements

I think we are beginning to see the benefit of the increased investment in our roads for the last 3 years and I hope that will be reflected in our next roads condition survey due to come to the EDI Committee in the next few months. That increase in funding comes to an end this year so it will be an important issue for us in our Budget discussions. Improved connectivity is an essential strand of our economic development action plan, and better roads are a key ingredient in that. I am pleased to report significant improvement in the condition of the B842 after Councillor Currie took me on a visit to Carradale and showed me the damage being done by the heavy vehicles engaged in the SSE work. Arising from that visit, negotiations took place with officers and the planning conditions were then complied with, leading to a significant improvement in the state of the road. While I was in the area I met with Network Carradale, discussed their aspirations for the area and visited the slipway there. Again I am pleased to report that the work on the slipway is now well under way and due for completion by the end of next month.

Councillor Ellen Morton

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