
REPORT BY POLICY LEAD FOR ROADS, INFRASTRUCTURE, AMENITY SERVICES AND SPECIAL PROJECTS

1. INTRODUCTION

This Policy Lead Report covers the period from 1st May to 20th October 2015. Members will be aware that during this period, I have, unfortunately, experienced some periods of illness and I would like to apologise for any impacts this may have had. I would also like to thank Councillor Robert G MacIntyre for all his support during this time in attending meetings etc on my behalf.

The number one issue at this time is, of course, budget. Service Choices has been a major focus for Roads, Infrastructure, Amenity Services and Special Projects, as it has for most other council services.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that members note the content of the report.

3. DETAIL**3.1 Roads**

In recent years, this council has considerably upped our roads spend and the improvements resulting from this investment are there for all to see. We are focused, going forward and given the financial challenges we face, on protecting our investment to date and seeking the most cost efficient ways in which we can maintain this vital asset.

3.2 Amenity Services

Budget processes to date have already identified savings from Amenity Services and we are actively seeking ways in which any further savings, resulting from the outcomes from the Service Choices consultations, can be made in a way which minimises the impacts on the amenity of the Argyll and Bute Council area.

3.3 Street Lighting

We are currently bringing forward proposals to implement LED Lighting solutions. Colleagues will recall that we had an informative seminar about LED Lighting which generated interest from members and explained the benefits of this type of lighting and the significant savings which can be achieved in the longer term.

3.4 Harbour Board

The first meeting of the Harbour Board was held on 13th August and a subsequent Harbour Board Development Day took place on 4th September. The introduction of these meetings was important to provide strategic direction within a council area where there are so many piers and harbours. The Harbour Board will take a strategic view of how to make the most of some of these currently underutilised assets to contribute to the economic development and well-being of Argyll and Bute through consistent and focused policy setting.

3.5 CHORD

There has been significant movement in the development of our CHORD areas.

3.5.1 Oban Phase 1

Oban Phase 1, Stafford Street, is now complete. The official opening was very successful with involvement from the British Legion and some beautiful paintings, by our local school children, which were put on display.

3.5.2 Oban Phase 2

Oban Phase 2, public realm contract has been let to Land Engineering, who will start on site on 4th January 2016. This means that over £2million of public realm improvements around Oban Bay are set to be completed by summer 2016.

I had a very positive meeting with OLI Members and contractors in relation to the implementation of Phase 2 of the project. We discussed, in addition to Land Engineering's outline programme for these works, how to minimise the disruption to local businesses, to the Mod and to the public, as outlined below.

I am delighted that Land Engineering has secured space at the old Rockfield School Building, as an information point within the town centre, where local people have a point of contact for any questions they may have. The major construction work will start on site on Monday 4th January 2016 and is expected to be completed by summer 2016. The tender for the contract indicated a start on site in October, however, after the contractor's expert civil engineers considered what work was involved, they determined that, in order to minimise disruption to the town across the busy Mod and Christmas periods, it would be more sensible to start in the New Year with completion planned in time for the summer.

This is a major project which, I am sure will greatly enhance the appearance and facilities in Oban.

At a time of financial challenge we continue to make targeted investment which will improve our towns and create the right conditions for jobs and I look forward to providing further up-dates as this exciting piece of work progresses.

3.6 Other special Projects

I have provided a brief up-date on progress towards some other Council projects below.

3.6.1 Oban Transit Berthing Facility

A location has now been agreed for this on the North side of North Pier and it is hoped that pontoons for visiting boats could be in place by 2017.

Some really positive discussions took place between Oban Bay Marine and the council over the summer. A deliverable scheme to provide a permanent transit berthing facility, in a technically suitable location, in a financially viable manner, was the result of these talks. The council is now gathering all the information needed to produce detailed designs for a long term facility which will bring economic benefits to our area. Once a full business case has been considered by Members, the council will then work on securing a suitable contractor to carry out these important works.

I am delighted that, again, through a commitment to working in partnership, a solution has been found which is deliverable and I look forward to being able to report on further progress as the project develops.

3.6.2 Oban/Lorn Arc Project Manager

I am delighted that Kirsteen Macdonald was appointed in August to take forward this important piece of regeneration work. Kirsteen was the Project Manager overseeing the successful implementation of the Campbeltown Berthing Facility.

Marie Campbell has been appointed to carry out the administration support for the project. Marie will be based in Oban from 16th November.

3.6.3 Lorn Arc Oban Airport Access Road

The implementation of this piece of infrastructure work to facilitate a new business park on 1st September, has meant the Council has met the Scottish Government's contractual requirement to have the First TIF Investment on site by the end of September 2015. Project completion is expected mid to late November

3.6.4 Helensburgh Outdoor Museum

I attended the Helensburgh CHORD Artwork Steering Panel Meeting on 23rd October.

The purpose of this steering group is to look at ways of sustaining the momentum provided by the Helensburgh CHORD works, at the Outdoor Museum, to grow a collection of "local treasures" for permanent display, adding to the interest of the Colquhoun Square area.

The Outdoor Museum has now been shortlisted for a prestigious "FX Interior Design Award" in the category "Museums and Exhibition Space". This is an international award, which means that it is competing against other entrants such as the Domunder archaeological experience under the Domplein Square, Utrecht, Netherlands and the Lotus Square Art Center, Zhuhai, China in the museum or exhibition space category.

The award ceremony, organised by the FX magazine, will be held in the Grosvenor House Hotel in London on Wednesday 25th November.

This is a great project which is being delivered by an art organisation called WAVEparticle, in partnership with architects Austin-Smith:Lord as part of the multi million pound regeneration project. The Outdoor Museum displays a collection of treasured objects brought forward by local residents and organisations in the town. It has been the onerous task of the Artwork Steering Panel to make selections from items which have been generously offered for inclusion in the museum and the installations funded by the Council through CHORD are now all in place and have been really well received.

Empty plinths remain for further displays and criteria have been drawn up for assessing any future suggestions to be funded by local individuals, organisations or businesses.

The steering group work is now complete and they will be making suggestions to the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee on how this project could continue to develop the outdoor museum concept through the creation of a community group who will have responsibility of taking the project in to the future.

I feel that the museum makes the newly revamped Colquhoun Square a very interesting place to visit and would encourage anyone to go and take a look. Being shortlisted for this award is a further endorsement of the reason why our ambitious council is committed to this sort of partnership working which enriches our living environment and brings people to the area.

3.6.5 Rothesay Pavilion and Dunoon Queens Hall

The procurement process is now underway to appoint contractors to undertake these key pieces of work which will bring enormous benefits to two of our towns.

3.6.6 Dunoon Wooden Pier

Work continues on this important project to restore the iconic Dunoon Pier through phases “1a and 1b”.

3.6.7 Campbeltown Berthing Facility

We held the official opening of this excellent facility in June. I am pleased to report that it has been well received, and this can be demonstrated by the increase in user numbers.

3.7 Meeting with David Stewart MSP

David Stewart MSP undertook a comprehensive tour of Argyll and Bute in August, looking at key investment sites and gaining an insight into the many economic opportunities and challenges faced by the council and its partners in delivering future economic growth. I accompanied Mr. Stewart, on the Oban and Lorn part of the tour. This visit looked at the recent CHORD investment to Stafford Street, examined plans for future phases of town centre investment and discussed issues such as the introduction of Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) to our islands. Later in the day we looked at the key sites associated with the Lorn Arc Initiative. We also visited SAMS and met with Dr Tracey Shimmield to speak about the organisation's work and plans for the future. I felt that this was a very positive meeting. He was clearly supportive of our work and keen to keep in touch to assist with our ongoing efforts to grow our economy and population.

3.8 Campbeltown and MACC

I attended a very successful Community Planning Partnership event in Campbeltown in September and took the opportunity over the 24th and 25th September to visit sites and projects around Machrihanish and Campbeltown. I was most impressed with the partnership and development working in this area which was so vibrant and positive.

3.9 Employee Excellence Awards

I attended the Employee Excellence awards on 9th October. It was great to see the number of staff who had been nominated to receive awards. The event served to remind all present of the number of highly committed staff we have here and the excellent services they provide.

3.10 Scotland Excel

I attended my first Scotland Excel meeting at the City Chambers in Glasgow on 12th June. This was for the meeting of their Executive Sub-Committee which was extremely interesting. During discussions, I made a request for Argyll and Bute Council to have a place on this committee next year, which seemed to be well received, but I will let you know in due course whether or not it was successful. The Council's involvement with the committee would provide greater confidence that the Argyll and Bute's particular circumstances are taken into account through Scotland Excel's procurement processes.

3.11 Hermitage Park

I attended a meeting with the Heritage Lottery Fund on 20th October at Hermitage Park in relation to the £2million bid we have made for funding. The meeting was attended by council officers including Pippa Milne, Arlene Cullum and Melissa Simpson as well as local community groups which included; Friends of Hermitage Park, the Royal British Legion, Men's Shed, Transition Helensburgh, young and adult carers and children and staff from Parklands. All local groups made a valuable contribution to the meeting, explaining why the park was important to them and a presentation was made by council officers, which was very well received. I felt that the meeting was very worthwhile, as the officers from the Heritage Lottery Fund gave an indication that they were very impressed with the proposal however they did have concerns regarding the current funding shortfall of £250k. Council officers are seeking to address this issue.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 We are all aware of the financial challenges which face us at this time. It is important that our council continues to invest prudently in roads, infrastructure, amenity services and special projects which will ensure the sustainability of the fragile remote and island communities of Argyll and Bute, as we strive to strengthen our local economy and grow our population.

5. IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Policy – None
5.2 Financial – None
5.3 Legal – None
5.4 HR – None
5.5 Equalities – None
5.6 Risk – None
5.7 Customer Service – None

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