

30th November 2017

POLICY LEADS REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report provides members with an update on key areas of activity for each Policy Lead Councillor. This aims to provide updates from all Policy Leads at each council meeting so that members are informed, up-to-date and able to engage with current issues.

The Economic Development portfolio sits with the council Leader and is included in the Leader's Report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the report.

3. POLICY LEAD FOR STRATEGIC FINANCE AND CAPITAL REGENERATION PROJECTS – Councillor Gary Mulvaney

- 3.1 **Introduction:** This report provides members with an update on my activities as Depute Leader and Policy Lead for Strategic Finance and for Capital Regeneration since September to date. I have held meetings and discussions with a range of officers across the policy briefs.
- 3.2 **Strategic Finance:** I have had regular meetings with Kirsty Flanagan, Head of Strategic Finance in terms of revenue and capital monitoring; budget outlook reporting and the finalisation of the Medium to Long Term Financial Strategy for the Council. In terms of the budget, the council were presented with management/operational savings which it agreed and our officers will now proceed to implement. Policy savings are to be further developed ahead of February's budget. It should also be borne in mind that even if all policy savings were taken, a yet unbridged gap remains and officers were asked to look at further savings options for members to consider. The first

member seminar on the Budget has taken place and there will be further seminars. A budget outlook paper will be brought to Policy and Resources in December - that will update members on the current scenarios and sensitivities and some further work around savings in loan charges. Later in the month the Scottish Government are due to announce the settlement on 14 December and that will at least provide some certainty around the largest part of our revenue stream. It should be noted that although the budget remains challenging for the year ahead in 2018/19, the years thereafter offer no respite at all and may prove even more demanding as the council seeks to balance resources with expenditure.

3.3 Capital Regeneration:

Oban Transit Berthing Facility: the facility has been open since the end of July and Marine Operations have staffed the facility since then, with additional staff being drawn down when required under an agreement with Bid4Oban. The long term 'Operator' tender will commence this month to secure an operational arrangement in time for March 2018. Initial uptake at the facility has been positive and well received both by users and the local community with nearly 700 boats and over 6500 visitors in the first two months.

Dunoon Queen's Hall: This is an £11million project with a 60 week construction period running to March 2018. It is a complex project encompassing demolition of structures on the southern and eastern elevations of the Queens Hall buildings; construction of new structures on those same elevations; major environmental improvements to, and realignment of the adjacent road network; works to be delivered in a brown-field town centre location, which requires to maintain access for pedestrian and vehicular traffic at all times; and works to be delivered in an area with significant pre-existing utility services (sewerage, water, gas, HV/LV electricity and telecoms), including a number, which were subsequently found, to be undocumented, incorrectly documented, or not in a good state of repair. Local members were provided with an update at their site visit in November and a detailed paper will be provided to the Bute and Cowal Area Committee at their December meeting, updating members on the commercial position of the project, issues affecting the build, and the impact of cost and timescales.

Rothsay Pavilion: In June the Council agreed to approve an additional financial underwriting of the project costs by a maximum of £1M, which would bring the maximum contribution that the Council would be asked to make to the project to £5.689M. This was to provide time for officers to secure additional funds from the key stakeholders, including: Heritage Lottery Fund (an additional **£856k**), Historic Environment Scotland (an additional **£150k**) and European Regional Development Fund (an additional **£83k**). As at the date of writing we have a total confirmed funding package of £13.944m with the main works contract due to be awarded at the

beginning of November, subject to us having received the formal 'Permission To Start' from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Works are expected to commence on site at the beginning of December for a period of 85 weeks, taking us through to building handover in July 2019.

Helensburgh Waterfront Development: The full project team is now actively engaged in the development of: the Stage 3 Developed Design; detailed Project Programme to completion; application packs for the various statutory consents e.g. planning, marine construction licence etc; and informal stakeholder engagement prior to the formal Pre-Application Process (planning). We are working to a programme which will see the new leisure centre and its swimming pool opening in July 2021, with the old facility being demolished by the end of December that same year.

- 3.4 Depute Leader:** I attended my first meeting of the Economic Forum in Helensburgh, COHI (Convention of the Highlands and Islands) in Oban and visited COSLA at the end of October. I was delighted to welcome the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Keith Brown MSP to the Rothesay Pavilion to mark the award of ERDF funding for the project. He met Project Manager, Peter McDonald, Julia Twomlow, Chief Executive of the Pavilion Charity along with the Leader and local Bute members. The minister has fond memories of the Pavilion and we look forward to welcoming him back as the project progresses.

4. POLICY LEAD FOR CORPORATE SERVICES – Councillor Rory Colville

- 4.1 Introduction:** I have regular meetings with the Executive Director of Customer Services and the Heads of Service to discuss matters relating to my remit. The most recent meetings took place on 5th September and 14th November. These meetings act as a useful forum to discuss any issues and to brief me on any Corporate Services-related matters.

4.2 Customer and Support Services

Updates in respect of Council Tax, Scottish Welfare Fund, Discretionary Housing Payments, Benefits processing, Pathfinder North, Customer Service Centre, and Procurement.

(a) Local Tax Collections

Council Tax collections for 2017/18 as at the end of October are 66.81%, up 0.21% on the previous year at this time.

Collections for 2016/17 are now 96.20% and this is down by 0.27% on previous year at this time. This year's collections were adversely affected by the increase in the premium on long term empty properties which is hard to collect and by the reduction in council tax reduction claimed.

Non-domestic rates collections for 2017/18 as at the end of October are 72.56%, down 1.94% on the previous year at this time. This is due to the new entries for shooting rights which have only now been added to the valuation roll backdated to 1 April. The bills for these were only issued at the start of October, as were application forms for small bonus scheme relief which many of these may be eligible for.

(b) Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF)

The programme funding for 2017/18 is £420,189. As at the end of October, £236,590 had been spent, which is 3.5% below the profiled amount. The Service are continuing to support high priority cases only, with the intention of being able to support at least this level for the full financial year.

(c) Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) and benefit cap

The confirmed funding to date for DHPs for 2017/18 is £641,772 – this now includes the final funding for 2016/17 received at the end of August. The Strategic Management Team has agreed to support the same priority cases in 2017/18 as we have done throughout 2016/17. At the end of October we had spent and committed £572,242, 88.4% of which is for under-occupancy cases. We have made 1095 awards out of 1191 determinations and have 16 applications awaiting processing or further information. All continuing under-occupancy cases have been processed which is why the bulk of the funding has now been committed.

(d) Benefits processing

New claims processing year to date to end of October has taken on average 19.7 days which is below our target of 21 days. Changes in circumstances year to date have taken on average 4.76 days which is also well below our target of 6 days. Our accuracy year to date is 97.2% which is also better than the target of 95%.

(e) Procurement, commissioning and creditors

For the year to date to end of October we have paid 96.89% of creditors invoices within 30 days, which is well above our target of 94% and much improved on last year at this time.

The Service are continuing to work closely with the Health & Social Care Partnership (H&SCP) to support them following the service of an Improvement Notice on a care home and the care home's desire to re-model their services.

The draft procurement strategy for next year has been revised following receipt of the consultation responses and this is on the agenda for the November council meeting.

The Service are running a series of local Procurement surgeries to ensure that local businesses are informed of the opportunities available to them when tendering for contracts for council services. The informative surgeries provides an opportunity to meet procurement officers, learn about the council's procurement procedures and find out more about forthcoming contracts, and the support that is available through the Supplier Development Programme. Last year (2016/17) the council awarded contracts worth a total value of £7.6M to local companies.

(f) Customer Service Centre (CSC)

The percentage of calls to CSC being abandoned for the quarter to end of October is 5.2% - well below our target rate of 7.5% although up on the first quarter of this year due to holidays. The average answered call time for the quarter was 3.30 minutes just below the target of 3.5.

The percentage of voice automation calls successfully transferred for October is 78.8%, now back up above the increased target of 78% following recent improvements made.

(g) Digital initiatives

- The outline business case (OBC) for proactive communications (reducing missed appointments and avoidable contacts) has been approved by the Transformation Board and the Customer Service Board and will now go forward to SMT.
- The OBC for universal direct debits is also going forward for approval.
- Detailed analysis is progressing on webforms, smartforms and voice forms.
- The implementation of the replacement system for council tax and benefits is proceeding apace with a very tight schedule to try and implement in February next year with new online facilities following early in 2018/19.
- The Chief and Senior Officers (COSO) meeting, which took place in Helensburgh on 10 November received an update report on all the new digital initiatives taken forward over the last 6 months through COSO. These include the extension of Skype for Business to Education, the new QKR app for online school payments, the use of messenger5 for communicating with parents in Education, SEEMIS online report cards, waste and recycling notification app, paying for parking permits online, integration between customer management system (CRM) and IDOX for regulatory services, and new council tax and benefits portal. Whilst many of these developments are still underway, the breadth of coverage is impressive and will be very significant in delivering future savings through greater channel shift to digital methods.

(h) Pathfinder North migration to SWAN

We fully transitioned off the Vodafone circuits as planned at the end of July and are nearing a settlement with Capita for the additional costs incurred due to the implementation delays. The principles of the settlement have

been agreed, and the final wording is under negotiation with our lawyers. The service are still confident that the additional costs can be covered from the already agreed budgets.

(i) ICT

- Average time to fix IT faults is 3.4 hours for October, well below our target of 5.5 hours.
- The Education Domain extension roll out has now been completed.
- Build and roll out of local Windows servers update service (WSUS) continues.
- The bi-annual ICT user satisfaction survey ran from end of October until 10 November and a results workshop is planned for mid-December, along with the other members of the Scottish benchmarking group.
- The Saffron catering management system is now live in all schools.
- Cash receipting, debtors, payables, Pecos and general ledger systems have all been updated to cater for the new Leisure Trust.
- An options appraisal over the future of the council print room is under way in view of the impact of stopping printing committee papers as this is over half the work of the print room. It is hoped to report on this in December.
- The kick off meeting with Ernst & Young took place on 26 October for their audit of our Microsoft licensing position. ICT have been provided with scripts to run across the Council's two active directory domains during November. This includes both Education and Corporate. The Service are reasonably confident that the Council are correctly licensed following work on this topic with Insight earlier this year.
- The Scottish Government is close to finalising their cyber resilience public sector action plan. It is expected that we will be required to seek Cyber Essential Plus accreditation by 31 March 2018 in addition to our accreditation for Public Services Network (PSN) which is due in January. We have recently commissioned the external health check for PSN, and unfortunately it is probable that we will need another one soon after for Cyber Essentials. We would hope that in future these scheme can be aligned. Our new ICT Security & Compliance Officer is now in post and will be kept very busy with all these new requirements in addition to preparing for the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) coming in May 2018.

4.3 Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

Governance and Law, and Customer and Support Services have assisted Bid4Oban in their preparations for a re-ballot, which was successfully completed on 6th October 2017. The outcome was a positive vote for renewal of the BID4Oban for another 5 years. The Bills for Bid4Oban second term have now been finalised. Continued assistance is now being given to PA23 to model their billings and finalise their ballot database. The Service is also helping Helensburgh with modelling for a possible new BID in that area.

4.4 Good News items:

HROD shortlisted for top national award

The HROD redesign project has reached the final of the Personnel Today Awards 2017 in the Award for Excellence in Public Sector HR category. HROD has responded to the Service Choices savings challenge by completely redesigning the service, moving to a single manager, increasing automation and self-service, providing a professional HR, Payroll and Organisational Development Team that focusses on people, improvement and performance.

It is one of nearly 100 organisations and individuals who have made the shortlist for the annual awards, which recognise and reward excellence in employers. Winners were due to be announced on 21st November.

5. POLICY LEAD FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE – Councillor Kieron Green

5.1 Policy Lead activities: I attended the COSLA Health and Social Care Board on 25th October and an IJB Chairs and Vice Chairs event on 31st October. Staffing levels in social care, free personal care for under 65s, the National Care Home Contract and regional planning of health services were key issues at these meetings. Locally I have also met with representatives from the Struan Lodge Development Group and “CARAH Cares” in Appin.

5.2 Adult Care

After Mears announced that they were withdrawing from the provision of homecare within Oban and Lorn, officers worked to ensure that care packages were transferred to other providers, along with supporting efforts to retain as many staff as possible within the care sector locally.

McKenzie Care were served an Improvement Notice by the Care Inspectorate for the Lynn of Lorne Care Home in Benderloch. This identified specific improvements to be made by 30 November 2017. Officers from the Health and Social Care Partnership have continued providing support and ensuring that residents have remained safe, with input from the Care Inspectorate. Further information has been provided to elected members in a detailed briefing issued in early November.

Development of care provision in rural and island areas is the focus of a new Argyll based community interest company “CARAH Cares”. This is drawing on learning from the pilot of community homecare in Appin and Lismore, which was supported by Highland Homecare and the Health and Social Care Partnership.

The amalgamation between Campbeltown Medical Practice and Kintyre Medical Group is progressing and development of progressive care in Lorn Campbell Court continues.

5.3 Criminal Justice

Work is ongoing to establish an in house team to support criminal justice work following the dissolution of the former Argyll, Bute and the Dunbartonshires Criminal Justice Partnership.

5.4 Planning

The West of Scotland Regional Plan is currently being developed, with Health and Social Care Partnership senior management represented on programme board and clinical reference group. Engagement events took place on the 20th September and 14th November which were attended by officers and IJB voting members from Argyll and Bute including myself.

Evidence was presented by Stephen Whiston, Head of Strategic Planning and Performance to the Scottish Parliament Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee on the requirement within the Islands Bill for “island impact assessments or island proofing” for health and social care services. Part of this was about transforming services to meet the current needs of populations – rather than relying on what may have existed previously or being able to meet all desires and expectation. The broader impact on the economic, social and cultural viability of islands within the context of demographic change was also considered.

Technology and Innovation in Health and Social Care was discussed by the Scottish Parliament Health and Sports Committee, with Stephen Whiston again joining other professionals in presenting evidence and answering questions. This included challenges and changes required to realise productivity gains expected through the integration of health and social care, and repeated previous calls for national leadership on this.

5.5 Finance

Service Improvement Officers are now being appointed to support significant redesigns set out in the Quality and Finance Plan. A Quality and Finance Board drawing on voting members of the IJB, trade unions and officers has been established to provide governance around the plan.

The Health and Social Care Partnership forecast budget gap for 2017-18 had decreased to £4.4m over the summer and a Financial Recovery Plan is in place to address this. Reasons for the remaining gap have included ongoing costs of medical locums and agency staff, increased demand for social care services and delays in achieving savings from the Quality and Finance Plan. The situation is being monitored and further actions, which may have policy implications will be presented to the IJB if needed.

Planning is now underway for changes to services that will be needed to achieve financial balance in 2018-19. At present an estimated £6.8m additional savings will be required, dependent on Council and Health Board budget allocations, however this cannot be confirmed until final budget announcements have been made.

6. POLICY LEAD FOR ROADS AND AMENITY SERVICES – Councillor Roddy McCuish

- 6.1 Introduction:** This report provides members with an update on my activities as Policy Lead for Road and Amenity Services to date. I have held regular meetings and discussions with a range of officers across the policy briefs and I thank them for all their kind assistance in my new roles.
- 6.2 A83 Taskforce:** I attended a meeting of the A83 Taskforce on 24 October with Humza Yousaf MSP, Minister for Transport and the Islands. The Taskforce received a presentation from BEAR Scotland and Transport Scotland regarding further works that are proposed on the Rest and Be Thankful. These include the provision of catch pits adjacent to the existing carriageway and planting of trees on the mountainside. Over time the trees should help bind the soil and also soak up some of the rainwater helping to reduce the risk of landslides in the future. The Taskforce also discussed the forthcoming roadworks on the A82 between Tarbet and Inverarnan. During the works there will be a daytime road closure. This is due to the very narrow and restricted road corridor and the need to carry out barrier repair, surfacing and associated drainage works. Also during the works, both Argyll and Bute and Stirling Council will be carrying out litter picking work to take full advantage of the closure. Transport Scotland will be permitting some limited access via permits to residents and businesses along the length of the closed section of road.
- 6.3 Trunk Road Liaison Group:** I have attended a meeting of the Argyll and Bute Trunk Road Liaison Group which consists of officers from our Council, Transport Scotland, BEAR Scotland and Police Scotland. The focus of this group is to coordinate roadworks and contribute towards road safety for the benefit of the travelling public. It is great to see officers from the above organisations collaborating for the common good of the travelling public. This approach and style of meeting should be replicated across other business areas.
- 6.4 Refuse Collection Calendars:** Every household in Argyll and Bute should by now have received their new refuse collection calendars for the next 12 months. I am pleased to note that some changes to collection dates have been introduced which provides further efficiency.

I have also learnt that other local authorities are proposing not to issue hard copy calendars but will publish the information directly onto the Council website for self-service. This is a model that I am keen the service explores further.

- 6.5 Kerrera Ferry Parking:** On 30 October I attended a meeting with Mr Yousaf, Minister for Transport and the Islands, Mr Russell, local MSP, local elected members, island residents and officers from the Council, CMAL and Calmac. This meeting discussed the recent improvements to the Kerrera slipways, breakwater and Transport Scotland taking over the formally privately operated ferry. The ferry car park is located partly on private land and the agent acting for the landowner is seeking a lease agreement to formalise the car park. Mr Yousaf has instructed Transport Scotland officials to enter into further negotiations with the landowners agent with a view to resolving future parking provision.
- 6.6 Festive Lighting:** We are now entering the second season of a three year funding provision for festive lighting. Positive discussions are taking place with numerous community groups regarding festive lighting for the future. Officers have sent out the schedule of installation and switch on for festive lights across the Council area and are working hard to ensure switch on events run smoothly.
- 6.7 Creating a Culture of Customer Care:** I have been working with officers across both Roads and Amenity and Customer Services with a view to being able to provide smoother and slicker communications in relation to enquiries both from elected members and our constituents. Over recent years customer enquiries have increased significantly while staffing numbers have reduced. Significant focus is being placed on this area of work as there is a strong commitment within the service to provide excellent customer service. More detailed updates will be provided to the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee in due course.
- 6.8 Winter Maintenance:** I am pleased to confirm that resources are in place to deliver the Winter Maintenance Service. Argyll and Bute Council has a statutory obligation, under Section 34 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984, to "...take such steps as it considers reasonable to, prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads" in the Council area, which by definition includes carriageways, footways, footpaths, pedestrian precincts, etc. We are starting winter with good resilience with over 10000 tonnes of salt in stock and a further 1500 tonnes due to be delivered by boat w/c 6th November.

We have in place a comprehensive network of weather stations and this was detailed in the presentation that the Head of Service gave to Members on 7th September at the Members Development Day.

6.9 Roads Reconstruction Capital Programme: The Capital Programme is substantially complete with a mixture of surface dressing, resurfacing and footway works. Approximately 90kms of carriageway network will have been improved.

7. POLICY LEAD FOR COMMUNITIES, HOUSING, GAELIC AND ISLANDS – Councillor Robin Currie

7.1 Since the last report, I have attended the Community and Wellbeing Board of COSLA and papers from those meetings are available for Members to read. At one of the Board meetings, I was re-appointed to serve on the Scottish Government's Crofting Stakeholders Forum. A lot of the Forum's work for the next year or so will be to work on a new Crofting Bill.

7.2 Islands: The work of the Argyll Islands Strategic Group, which I chair, has focused in recent months on the Islands Bill and ensuring the views of our Island Communities are heard as the Bill Passes stage 1. To help the Group understand the views of island communities we carried out an online consultation with island community councils and development trusts and also encouraged individuals to submit responses to the Bill. Taking full account of what was said a written response was submitted to the Scottish Government and evidence was presented to the Rural Economic and Connectivity Committee at the Scottish Parliament. Worth noting that we received many thanks for conducting our consultation with island communities and the fact that what they said was relayed to the Scottish Government.

7.3 Housing: The Strategic Housing Investment Plan was approved by Full Council on 28th September. Since the last update 2 affordable housing units have been completed on Coll and 8 in Oban and I was delighted to officially open both developments.

The Council has been working closely with the MOD/HMNB Clyde and made a housing presentation to partners in Helensburgh on 28th September. We are working with HMNB to try and secure a Future Accommodation Model pilot for the Helensburgh and Lomond area.

The Council has submitted a Housing Infrastructure Fund bid to the Scottish Government to assist with the costs of upgrading Kirk Road in Dunbeg. We have been in dialogue with the Scottish Government and hope to hear the outcome of the bid in the next few weeks.

The Council have started the process of carrying out a Housing Market Study in Helensburgh and Lomond. We will work closely with all interested parties including the Health and Care Partnership in order to gain an accurate view of the current housing needs in the area.

A Scotland's Energy Efficiency Programme (SEEP) has been approved for a ground source heat pump district heating system for Iona village in partnership with Iona Renewables.

I recently attended, along with six other Housing Conveners, an informal dinner and discussion with the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities, Angela Constance and the Minister for Local Government and Housing, Kevin Stewart. This was an enjoyable evening and a wide range of topics were discussed such as SHIPs, CPOs for house building, assistance for self-build, Universal Credit, infrastructure fund, etc.

7.4 Live Argyll Launch

I'm delighted that the new leisure and libraries trust, Live Argyll, has now taken over delivery of local leisure services, including swimming pools, gyms, libraries and some community halls.

Since the budget decision of February 2016, there has been a significant amount of work to put in place effective arrangements for the new trust. We have a keen, committed, and experienced board in place to lead the trust, and have appointed an equally enthusiastic and knowledgeable general manager and team who will drive forward the delivery of quality leisure services. It is fair to say that since Live Argyll officially came into being on 2nd October, everyone involved has hit the ground running and are working very hard to make sure that it goes from strength to strength.

7.5 Community Planning and Community Development:

Supporting Communities Fund – a Participatory Budgeting Pilot. It was agreed at Council in September 2017 to have a pilot using a Participatory Budgeting (PB) approach with the Supporting Communities Fund. The first stage, the ideas site, of the pilot process will start week commencing 13th November 2017. The ideas site, www.abpb.co.uk, is for organisations and community groups to post ideas on projects they would like to use funding to make happen in their administrative area. People are encouraged to share thoughts on projects and look for potential opportunities to collaborate. The ideas site is open until 22nd December 2017. The deadline for applications to the fund is 22 January 2018.

Voting will open in April 2018. During the January – April period, the applications will be scored and a list of proposed projects taken to the March Area Committee meeting. Voting will be open to anyone aged 16yrs or over, living in Argyll and Bute.

Marketing will run during both the ideas stage and the voting stage. Information will also go directly to everyone who has applied for a Supporting Communities Fund Grant / Third Sector Grant in the last 3 years, community and third sector contacts, community councils, parent councils and all who participated in the Growing Gaelic PB project earlier this year.

Community Planning Partnership's Full Partnership Meeting, 5 December: The annual meeting of the Community Planning Partnership takes place in Arrochar Three Villages Hall on Tuesday 5 December. A multi-agency working group have been planning the day which will see a variety of presentations and workshops highlighting the excellent partnership work across Argyll and Bute to date, and the challenges for the future. Jamie Hepburn MSP, Minister for Employability and Training will deliver the key note speech for the day. The day includes information on youth volunteering, mental health, skills and careers, the work of the MOD, recruitment and retention across partners, community justice, falls response and business development – we believe the agenda will have something of interest to all partners. Around 80 people are expected to attend, including national and local partners, and community planning delivery leads and local area community group planning chairs.

8. POLICY LEAD FOR EDUCATION – Councillor Yvonne McNeilly

8.1 Education – the way forward:

Following the Scottish Government's education governance review, Argyll and Bute Council will now join the eight-member Northern Alliance Collaborative. The member councils are Argyll and Bute, Moray, Western Isles, Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City, Highland, Orkney and Shetland.

The timeframe for the Northern Alliance to be fully operational is January 2018 as outlined in the Chief Executive's report to council in October.

At the time of writing arrangements were in hand for a meeting of the alliance just prior to the council meeting on 30th November. Cllr Kieron Green was due to attend as Depute Policy Lead for Education.

I was part of the interview panel for the Improvement Lead Officer position on Thursday 26th October. Subsequently Ms Gayle Gorman of Aberdeen City Council was appointed. She interviewed very well and has enormous experience in both the Scottish and English systems – including reporting directly to ministers on key education policy issues.

Gayle has worked in both rural and inner city authorities and also has experience of collaborative working in set-ups similar to that of the Northern Alliance. Her fellow directors and chief executives regard her very highly

and, along with our own Chief Executive, I am confident that she will do a very good job.

8.2 New Kirn Primary School:

Pupils and staff moved into the newly completed Kirn Primary School on Thursday 2nd November, with minimal delay and considerable support from the local community who are understandably excited to see a new state of the art learning facility.

Plans are in hand for an official opening which will involve current and former pupils and, we hope, the Depute First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education, John Swinney, who has previously expressed an interest in participating.

The move to and from Dunoon Grammar School while work on the new build was ongoing has gone very smoothly. At DGS itself, the well regarded Head Teacher, David Mitchell, has returned to his post after a secondment to Hermitage Academy, where a new Head Teacher, Robert Williamson, has been appointed and has taken up post in Helensburgh. He was previously HT at Drumchapel High School and brings with him considerable experience and enthusiasm.

8.3 Education Scotland: The final visit in the inspection process took place during September and a number of colleagues participated in this. The final report on Argyll and Bute is expected early next year.

8.4 Children and Young People's Services Plan 2017/20: this vision for achieving the very best for our young people is a commitment and partnership between the council and NHS Highland. It's a key part of our drive to give children and young people the best possible start, providing a framework for professionals, parents, carers and volunteers so that, with us, the best possible services are delivered. It's been produced in consultation with young people across the area and through careful planning with a range of agencies and community planning partners.

8.5 Good news stories from our schools: All councillors receive the press releases issued by our Communications Team on behalf of the Education Service, so you'll be well aware of the volume of good news and success stories coming from our young people and our schools – there are almost too many to list here, but I'd like to share some of them with you.

I was particularly impressed by the young Digital Leaders from Dunoon who came to present their Our Children, Their Future app development to the Community Services Committee. We were all blown away by their confidence, their eloquence, their imagination and their technical ability. They were inspired to develop and create their own app linked to the

council's education vision strategy launched earlier this year and demonstrated it in action to the chamber. They also brought along some digital robots they've been working on and set up demonstration stations in the corridors of Kilmory – great fun but also a major achievement.

Following the visit of Amberg Sulzbach in October we've heard that some of our young people from Bute and Oban are due to visit Germany next year as part of the follow-up activity arising from the visit. It's great that our young people have the chance to build these connections and they're also using what they learn in the exchange process to work towards SQA accredited qualifications and Youth Achievement Awards.

Pupils at Port Ellen Primary School have been shortlisted as finalists in this year's Rolls Royce Science Prize, which seeks to build children's understanding and experience of engineering. Their submission to the awards received a special merit and was one of only six which Rolls Royce will support over the coming year – well done!

If you watched the BBC documentary The Country Council you'll have seen pupils from Kirn opening a time capsule discovered during the Queen's Hall works – a really exciting opportunity for them to play a part in Dunoon's history.

9. POLICY LEAD FOR PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES – Councillor David Kinniburgh

8.1 Planning:

Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) update

As noted in my previous report the council has a statutory duty to replace the current Local Development Plan, which was adopted in March 2015, by March 2020 and as such the Development Plan Scheme (DPS) sets out the programme for key milestones in the process.

At the last council meeting members approved the Main Issues Report (MIR) being issued for public consultation. This process is now under way and will conclude on 11th December 2017. The consultation is available online and the documents are available in all Council Libraries.

As well as meeting key stakeholders and other interested parties in the consultation process officers have also held a number of public drop-in events and have visited Area Committees.

The information from the MIR consultation will be used to inform the draft LDP2 which is due to be completed by May 2018 and will be subject to further consultation.

Details of the Development Plan Scheme and LDP2 process can be found at: <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/ldp2>

8.2 Building Standards: Commercialisation

Building Standards have retained the 'verifier' contract with Babcocks International Ltd and are also processing applications on behalf of both Edinburgh City Council and Moray Council. As a result the service is on target to meet a very challenging budget of being self-financing from fee income alone.

Customer Service Excellence (CSE)

Building Standards were the first service within the council to be accredited for Customer Service Excellence and they have successfully passed a number of audits in recent years to retain the award. On writing this report they are due to be audited for their CSE award on 22nd November and I will report the result at a later date.

8.3 Regulatory Services: Shellfish Monitoring Contract

In my last report I advised that Regulatory Services had formally submitted a tender to CEFAS (Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science) to deliver a shellfish monitoring programme for 2018/21.

Unfortunately their bid to retain the shellfish contract for a further three years has been unsuccessful with the contract being awarded to Hallmark (a commercial arm of the Food Standards Agency).

This is extremely disappointing as they have been delivering the contract to a high standard for the last ten years.

Export certificates/movement documents for shellfish.

Regulatory Services continue to support a significant food export sector which operates on an international market. Demand is greater than last year with 1450 certificates being issued for period April to October, as opposed to 1056 in 16/17.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 This report provides members with an update on each of the Policy Lead portfolios. Policy Lead Councillors will be happy to provide more detail or discuss any particular issues with colleagues as required.

11. IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Policy - None

11.2 Financial – None

11.3 Legal – None

11.4 HR – None

11.5 Equalities – None

11.6 Risk – None

11.7 Customer Service – None

**Argyll and Bute Council – Policy Lead Councillors Report
20th November 2017**

For further information please contact Aileen McNicol, Leadership Support and Member Services Manager, telephone 01546 604014 or email ailen.mcnicol@argyll-bute.gov.uk