

26th April 2018

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 all members are informed, up-to-date and able to engage with current issues.

Please note that 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, Policy Lead for Strategic Finance and Policy Lead for Capital Regeneration since December 2017 to date. I have held regular 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 for Q3; finalisation of the Medium to Long Term Financial Strategy for the Council as well as the preparation of the budget 2018/19. The council unanimously agreed the Administration's budget proposals in February and officers will implement the budget decisions and policy saving along with the management/operational savings previously agreed.

The focus for the next few months will be further development of the capital prioritisation process within the One Council model agreed by council. There will of course be a lot of work as the department prepares the draft year-end and statutory accounts for 2017/18.

3.3 Capital Regeneration:

Oban Maritime Visitors' Centre

This officially opened on Friday 6 April. The centre is part of an overall £3.1 million CHORD investment in Oban and provides a dedicated changing area with toilets, showers and lockers, a harbourmaster's office, as well as a commercial space on the ground floor for rent. Our small officer team led by Kirsteen MacDonald, working with TSL Contractors, have delivered an excellent facility for both marine tourism in the west coast and the important and growing cruise ship market.

Oban North Pier Pontoons

The tender to fix the issues with the north face wall failed to produce a viable bid. As a result we are going to proceed with the small works to the railings, signage, copes, and poles over the next month.

Helensburgh Waterfront Development

Since the project start, I have initiated a monthly 'quad' meeting involving me as the Policy Lead along with the Area Chair, Vice Chair and Chair of Live Argyll to ensure information affecting this development is being effectively shared and cascaded. I have also attended local community council meetings to offer an input where required. Currently this project is at the mid-point of the PAC process (pre-application consultation) with one open public consultation event already having taken place. That event was well attended with over 200 people attending and having the opportunity to speak to the design team and provide some comments/suggestions. Initial indications are that the public are supportive of the exterior design, its location, and the general internal layout. There will be two further public events within the PAC timetable and the Area Committee have agreed a special meeting (30 May) to finally approve the design and submission for planning consent.

Dunoon Queens Hall

Construction works began in January 2017 and the project is now in the final stages of construction, with the building due to be made available for fitting out from the beginning of June.

The fit out is being taken forward by the Council's CHORD Team in partnership with Live Argyll and will include providing the necessary equipment etc for: the children's soft play facility; the new public library; the fitness and training suites; the main kitchen, café and bar; as well as general office and meeting room furniture.

The public realm works have seen a major re-design of the road layout at the key junction of Alexandra Parade, Pier Esplanade and Argyll Street to provide a much more pedestrian friendly environment.

Following completion of the fit out exercise the refurbished building will be re-opened for public use with a number of planned events e.g. ABBA Mania (28 July), the Proclaimers (3 August) and Dunoon Mod 2018 (12 – 20 October) showcasing what is set to be a fantastic new addition to life in Dunoon, both as a leisure facility for local people, and a boost for the local economy as an events venue and visitor attraction. The commercial position will be reported to Policy and Resources in May.

Rothesay Pavilion

The contractor, CBC Ltd, started on site in November 2017 with a projected completion date of July 2019. The work is currently on programme and budget. Current works include the demolition of non-load bearing walls, foundation and floor strengthening. Forthcoming works will include a liquid roof application; stone washing trial in advance of replacement/repairs; replacement of roof lights; and windows replacement.

Funds are now being drawn down from the various funding partners. The pavilion charity were successful with a recent application to the West Coast Foundation and were awarded £116,957. They have now raised £131,757 against their target of £400,000. They have made two other funding applications with one more to come in May which will hopefully get them to their target.

Finally my thanks go to Peter MacDonald for all his work on the project – he has secured a permanent post with HIE and will leave the council on May 4th and we wish him well. John Gordon will manage this project until the advertised vacancy is filled.

- 3.4 Depute Leader Update:** I continue to meet regularly with the Leader, the Chief Executive and other officers in terms of this role, covering a wide range of subjects. In early February I joined the Leader in welcoming Lord Duncan to Argyll and Bute with a specially arranged meeting in Oban – we were able to showcase the strengths and opportunities this area offers which could be exploited from a rural deal.

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 6th March and 3rd April 2018. These meetings serve as a useful forum to discuss any issues and to brief me on any Corporate Services-related matters.

4.2 Volunteering Conference: I was invited to attend the “Turning Volunteer Participation Upside Down” event, in the Victoria Halls, Helensburgh on 16 March 2018. As part of the Improvement Service’s Leading Practice Conference Programme the Council, together with Volunteer Scotland and the Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface, joined the Improvement Service to explore how volunteers and the public sector can collectively improve outcomes for our communities.

One of the main reasons for calling the conference is that there has been a national decline in volunteering, however it is evident that volunteering is on the increase in Argyll and Bute, which is encouraging. A range of volunteers and volunteer coordinators were interviewed in advance of the event and short videos of their personal experiences were shown at the conference to ensure that their voice was heard. There are some great examples of volunteering within the Council and I am keen to see how we can build on this. Officers are currently in the process of reviewing the Council’s guidance and supporting documentation in support of volunteering and look forward to the details of this coming forward in due course.

4.3 Customer and Support Services:

Action on Poverty

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 received Royal Assent on 18th December 2017. The Act requires Scottish Ministers to prepare 4 yearly delivery plans, the first covering 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2022. Amongst other matters these must set out the measures they propose to take to support local authorities to consider the automatic payment of benefits and support, and for setting the amount of revenue support grant payable to each local authority to ensure that resources are directed for the purpose of contributing to the meeting of child poverty targets.

Local authorities are required, along with the local Health Board, to publish jointly an annual local child poverty action report. This must set out the measures taken by each during the preceding year to contribute to the targets and the measures proposed for the future. A draft Anti-Poverty Strategy and associated plan has been drafted by Officers and the work required to meet the requirements of the Act is being co-ordinated through the Welfare Reform Working Group, which is chaired by the Head of Customer and Support Services. The draft strategy and action plan will be

brought to Committee for consideration and approval early in the new financial year.

Local Tax Collections

Tax collections for 2017/18 as at the end of February are 94.78%, up 0.29% on the previous year at this time.

Collections for 2016/17 are now 96.46% and this is down by 0.24% 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 February are 97.56%, up 0.33% on the previous year at this time. I am pleased to report that collections have recovered following the late addition of shooting rights at the start of October.

Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF)

The programme funding for 2017/18 is £420,189. As at the end of February, £368,819 had been spent, which is 4.2% 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. Programme funding has been announced for 2018/19 and is £438,720 – an increase of 4.4%. This is due to a change in distribution which is now more closely linked to deprivation levels. The increase is very welcome as we are expecting a big increase in crisis grant claims once we go live with Universal Credit Full Service.

It is expected that a report will come to Policy and Resources in May to carry forward the £18,595 previously earmarked for 2017/18 into 2018/19 to utilise for bank tutors to help deliver the Council's commitment to providing Digital Inclusion training for claimants who will be required to sign up for Universal Credit online.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) and benefit cap

The confirmed funding to date for DHPs for 2017/18 is £641,772. At the end of February the Council has paid and committed £601,143, 86.4% of which is for under-occupancy cases. We have made 1245 awards out of 1430 determinations and have 52 applications awaiting processing or further information.

There has been an increase in the demand for DHPs in 2017/18 as a result of the implementation of the Benefit Cap in November 2016. Around 24 families are affected by the benefit cap in our area.

Customer Service Centre (CSC)

The call abandon rate for February was 5.4%, well below the target of 7.5%. The resolved at first point of contact was 91.6% against a target of 91%. The Voice automated switchboard successfully routed 80.2% of calls against a target of 78%.

Mhairi Renton, our CSC Manager retired at Easter after nearly 38 years of service. Thanks go to Mhairi for her very valued contributions to Customer Service over the years.

4.4 Improvement and HR:

Health and Wellbeing Survey

The Council issued a health and wellbeing survey to all employees, including those in the Health and Social Care Partnership. As an employer, it is important to find out what issues our employees are facing day to day that may impact on their health and wellbeing. For the Council to deliver quality services, we need a workforce that is healthy and present at their work. The response rate to the survey was good, with over 1000 employees taking part. The data is now being analysed and a detailed report will be presented to the HR Board in May and thereafter to members.

Electronic Payslips

As part of savings being made in HROD, we have been moving steadily towards the removal of paper payslips for employees. As well as saving on printing costs, this is in line with our 'Do It Digital' approach to business. This has been in place for office based employees for 2 years now and, from April 2018 will be extended to all employees. The team has been working with managers and with our colleagues in the Trade Unions to ensure that all employees are supported to access their payslips online and have received appropriate training. We will now move to piloting online payslips for elected members.

- 4.5 Defibrillator for Kilmory:** I am pleased to advise that, following my request to officers to look at the possibility of having a defibrillator installed in Kilmory, there is now one in place across from the council Chamber. This is a welcome addition to the building and the relevant first aiders have been trained on its use.

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

- 5.1 Visits and Meetings:** As Vice-Chair of the Argyll and Bute Integration Joint Board (IJB) I attended IJB meetings on 31 January and 28 March. As a member of the IJB Strategic Planning, Clinical and Care Governance, and Audit Committees, and the Quality and Finance Board I have also attended these. This included meeting Chairs and Vice Chairs of Locality Planning

Groups (LPGs) on 16 March to find out what their views were on their position within the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP).

I have continued to participate in the IJB Chairs and Vice Chairs network which brings together 62 individuals from across Scotland. The latest meeting was on 11 December, where given the size of the network it was decided to form a smaller IJB Chairs and Vice Chairs Executive Group with 10 representatives. Both Robin Creelman (Chair of the Argyll and Bute IJB) and I were selected to join this, and the Executive has now met several times. I have been elected Vice Chair of the Executive and in this capacity I attended the Ministerial Strategic Group (MSG) for Health and Social Care on 21 March. Meetings of the Network and Executive will continue in order to be able to share experiences and present common issues and concerns to government.

As a member of the COSLA Health and Social Care Board I attended meetings of this on 1 December, 9 February and 6 April, and was one of the representatives of the board at meetings with the Scottish Government on 24 November and 26 January. If members would like more detail on the agenda items and our officer briefings, please contact Leadership Support.

Unfortunately due to poor weather the planned Health Regional Engagement Event on 1 March did not go ahead however I continue to keep abreast of the issues arising from this and potential impacts on services within Argyll and Bute.

I have visited a number of HSCP services – including the Lochgilphead and Woodlands Learning Disability Resource Centres, the new extra care housing at Lorne Campbell Court, Campbeltown Hospital and the new Succoth Ward in the Mid Argyll Community Hospital.

I have also attended public meetings about the new GP contract, the introduction of community teams, and the impact on health and social care of Britain exiting the European Union.

- 5.2 Adult Services:** Residents have been moved out of Clydeview Care Home in Cardross following concerns which had been present for some time regarding the establishment. A moratorium on admissions had been in place for 4 months, with support offered from a wide range of professionals including social work, district nursing and GPs. Unfortunately progress was not being made even after a formal Improvement Notice was issued by the Care Inspectorate on 9 March. The facility owners took the decision to close Clydeview on 29 March. The HSCP will be continuing to monitor the former residents and review their experience, and in addition are conducting a Large Scale Investigation in accordance with the Adult Support and Protection procedures.

Ardnahein Care Home in Dunoon was served an Improvement Notice by the Care Inspectorate with significant progress required by the end of April. This followed an inspection which resulted in grades, which had historically been good, being reduced to the lowest possible for all categories in February. A moratorium is in place and the home has appointed a new manager. This situation is being very closely monitored and appropriate support is being provided. To date sufficient progress appears to be being made with regards to all of the notice requirements.

A new palliative care area is being developed at the Victoria Hospital in Rothesay with support and fundraising from local businesses and a grant of over £10,000 from MacMillan Cancer Support. This will accommodate both the people receiving care as well as family members.

Work continues in Oban, Lorn and the Isles to develop Community Teams which will bring together a range of health and social care professionals. Road shows have taken place throughout the area to inform communities of these developments.

Delayed discharges remain an issue in Lorn and the Islands Hospital with home care capacity still a restriction, and discussions are ongoing regarding commissioning increased provision.

A further successful workshop was held on Mull to develop a GP practice there, with the HSCP working with communities to develop innovative ideas for recruitment.

Residents have now moved from the former Auchinlee Care Home to the new supported and progressive care environment in Lorn Campbell Court.

5.3 Children and Families: Christina West is replacing Ann Marie Knowles as chair of the Children and Young Person's Strategic Planning Group.

Who Cares Scotland led a training session for the Children's Champions at the most recent meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

The Care Inspectorate have indicated that we are likely to be inspected during FQ 2 or FQ3 of 2018. There is no specific date as the methodology for the inspection is still being finalised.

A foster carer's Development Day was held on 24 March.

5.4 Planning: The department is progressing a number of streams of work including supporting the implementation of the new GP Contract and using the "Near Me" video conference service. Scottish Government waiting times

initiative funding has been used to reduce pressure within the ophthalmology and dermatology services.

Telecare and Telehealth services across the HSCP are being enhanced and managed as a single service within the planning department. This will include using council and government funding to transfer of 200 telecare users from analogue to digital services. A further £250,000 has been identified to be invested in the service providing additional telecare outreach workers, a nurse, and a support officer for the on line psychological therapy service.

There is now a secure virtual network connection *VRF* between council and NHS systems with upgrades network infrastructure to follow by the end of May. Over coming months the *Orion* portal system to allow securing viewing of patient and client records across health and care systems in Argyll and Bute and into NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde will be in place and migration of community nursing and allied health professional records to the council owned *Carefirst* system will be completed.

A business case being developed this year to upgrade *Carefirst* to the next generation of software *Eclipse*. This will enable mobile working for all staff, enhancing asset utilisation and staff productivity with enhanced value for money and potentially producing a cost saving.

- 5.5 Finance:** At the IJB meeting on 28 March changes to services were approved that will deliver £3.0m worth of additional savings on top of £7.7m previously agreed. This leaves a remaining budget gap of £2.4m for 2018-19 with further proposals to address this to be brought before IJB in May. A Quality and Finance Plan for 2019-21 will be developed alongside the next iteration of the Strategic Plan.

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.

At the time of writing the next regional transport partnership meeting with HITrans was due to take place in Dunoon on the evening of 19th April and during the day on 20th April. This will provide an opportunity to showcase this particular part of Argyll and Bute.

The partnership authorities in the Northern Roads Collaboration (NRC) have now all got approval from their respective council committees to formally join the NRC. Its first formal meeting will take place in Aberdeen on 18th May.

- 6.2 Service response to winter:** The winter storm that hit parts of central belt and affected Bute, the Southern part of Cowal and the southern part of Helensburgh and Lomond. Roads and Amenity staff worked with other Council departments, the NHS, blue light services and communities/individuals to respond to the challenges that the weather conditions had imposed. Overall the response was well coordinated and well received by the communities across our area. The teams have received a number of thank yous and compliments including a personal letter from the MP.

This winter has had a number of snow events and has seen an increase in winter activity, salt use and treatment runs. Understandably, this has seen this part of the service exceed in the available budget, due to the severity of the winter. A report on this is due to come to Policy and Resources in due course.

- 6.3 Creating a Culture of Customer Care:** A project was initiated in the spring of 2017 by the Head of Roads and Amenity Services (RAS) to address the issue of demand being greater than capacity and to find solutions which would make the best use of existing frameworks, automation and systems, as well as streamlining processes, to provide an effective overall customer service solution.

Significant work has been ongoing across the Roads and Amenity and the Customer Service Centre (CSC) to find optimal solutions for the high volume/high impact categories of customer contact.

Some highlights to date include: better provision of proactive information in relation to bin collections which has seen a marked reduction in contacts to the Council; availability of weather stations cameras on the website (second most popular page), allowing people to plan journeys in winter, with no need to contact the Council; a changed process for ordering food waste bin liners in Helensburgh and Lomond which makes it easier for customers and significantly reduces admin for the service.

Other improvements in the pipeline include integration between the roads works management system and the customer service system to allow automatic updates to enquiries; improvements to the missed bin reporting process allowing more enquiries to be dealt with first time.

The work on high impact products should conclude in early course, with further scoping and improvement works required for other types of contact.

- 6.4 Capital programme and what members can expect to get from this:** Additional capital funding was allocated at the February Budget meeting. This now means that we are able to invest in roads infrastructure at a level which exceeds the standstill position.

The draft programme was presented the EDI Committee on 8th March 2018 following which there has been some minor amendments and the final programme issued to all Elected Members for information.

This programme has been designed using the Road Condition Index (RCI) which is produced by a national road condition survey. This survey information is used by officers to determine a programme. In addition to the RCI data, information such as road traffic collisions, known development, activities such as timber harvesting and a skid condition (of the carriageways surface) which is measured by a separate survey are also considered together with information brought from Elected Members, community groups and stakeholders. This information is considered at officer level when appropriate engineering judgement is also applied to ensure that maximum benefit can be derived from the available investment.

- 6.5 Transformation – merging operational teams and creating the HUB:** As part of ongoing transformation work, the Roads and Amenity operations teams will merge as one. This will see a single operations team in place across all the areas but with specialist skills being retained and used wherever possible. This will provide more resilience to what has been a reducing workforce over a number of years, enabling the best response to be provided for day to day activities and also exceptional events such as the recent winter conditions. As part of this transformation package, the control hub will be formed. This will enable programming and coordination of all works to be carried out in one place, making better use of the existing systems to provide an efficient and effective service. The focus of the hub and the operations team will be closely linked to the customer care project mentioned earlier.

- 6.6 Three Weekly Collections across 48,000+ households:** The three weekly collections have been in place for just over 12 months across the whole Council area, we are now benefitting from an increase in recycling and a reduction in landfill as a result. Recycling and composting has risen from 33.9% in 2016 to circa 36.5% in 2017 with the combined recycling, composting and recovery rate rising from 46.5% in 2016 to circa 49.4% in 2017. Overall landfill has reduced from 53.5% in 2016 to 50.6% in 2017.

- 6.7 Marine Works and Progress:** Good progress is being made in the Marine area, both with updating and maintaining the Port Marine Safety Code

(PMSC) and also developing the asset management plan for asset sustainability and asset improvement works. A summary of ongoing works is as follows:

Islay – this service becoming the ‘most capacity constrained’ in future. Currently CMAL has produced plans for extending their ports at both Kennacraig and Port Ellen to enable larger vessels to berth alongside; this will improve resilience to the service in the event of larger back-up vessels being required. Arch Henderson has been commissioned by the Council to consider the feasibility of extending the berth at Port Askaig – this work is ongoing. The next major vessel procured by Calmac to be allocated to the Islay service to replace the MV Hebridean Isles.

Oban to Craginure – Calmac plans to deploy the MV Hebrides as the primary summer-season vessel on this route, with the MV Isle of Mull or MV Isle of Arran as the secondary vessel. The costs for works to accommodate these vessels overnight at Craginure will be considerable; the Council, with prior agreement from Transport Scotland, has issued a consultancy brief for a STAG report on future options for Craginure Pier.

Oban to Lismore – Initially, the Ferries Plan noted that two services operated to Lismore and there was an intention to work towards one service only. The VRDP now notes that this is a long-term aspiration and that the original appraisal will be subject to review. Currently the Council is working on improvement works at both Port Appin and Point on Lismore.

Fionnphort to Iona – The Ferries Plan sets out a long-term proposal to construct a berthing facility at Fionnphort which would allow for a longer operating day and provide a more suitable overnight berth in terms of crew access. The Council has engaged a consultant to consider the feasibility of providing a new breakwater at Iona and overnight berth at Fionnphort. A contract for carrying out ground investigation works in the area is expected to be awarded shortly.

Tayinloan to Gigha – The Ferries Plan included a long-term proposal to make improvements at Gigha which would allow the ferry to be berthed overnight at the ferry slip – this would allow for a longer operating day. A feasibility study has been carried out by the Council and the next stage will be to progress the design of the new infrastructure – comprising of an overnight berth at Gigha and aligning structure at Tayinloan. It is likely that any new development at Gigha would include provision of a charging point to enable the deployment of a hybrid ferry as a future aspiration – as outlined in the VRDP.

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

7.1 Community Councils: Following close of nominations on 22nd March, there will be two contested elections - one in Jura and one in Kilninver & Kilmelford. Forty-two Community Councils will be formed by uncontested elections. There are 12 community councils that cannot be formed due to insufficient nominations being received (less than 50% of the maximum membership level).

In most cases we are one or two short of being able to form a community council but there are four community councils where we need 3, 4 or 5 candidates to be nominated. We're looking at a timetable for a by-election to fill these.

7.2 Communities: Following an active engagement period and robust assessment of applications to the Supporting Communities Fund, the Area Committees have agreed which projects will go forward to the public vote on a new digital platform on April 3rd. The Community Development team, being mindful of the potential for digital exclusion, have many events planned during the 4 week voting period in which to promote active participation and support individuals who cannot access online voting.

7.3 Islands: The Argyll Islands Strategic Group, which I Chair, has met twice since my last report; at the January meeting the group discussed the Scottish Government Island Liaison Directors Initiative pilot which will run for a period of 18 months. The group also considered the policy review by Scottish Government into ferry freight fares and gave consideration to information relating to the Rural Tourist Infrastructure Fund and to the Island Infrastructure Levy. The meeting of the National Islands Group due to be held in January was cancelled due to bad weather, it is now hoped that this will take place in April/May.

The Islands Bill continues to make progress in Parliament, Stage 2 amendments have been considered on March 21st and 28th, with the expectation that Stage 3 of the Bill could be around early to mid-May. Updates on this work are routinely tabled at the AISG to keep us informed of progress. Unfortunately the anticipated attendance at our March meeting by Humza Yousaf, Minister for Transport and the Islands had to be cancelled at short notice due to urgent parliamentary business, we are now working with his office again to see what can be put in place for a future meeting.

Fuel poverty is a big issue for us in Argyll and Bute and we have provided a response to the Scottish Government's Fuel Poverty Strategy Consultation which outlined a proposed new definition for fuel poverty. The response outlined disappointment that the Scottish Government haven't provided a rural

weighting on their proposed definition for fuel poverty. In areas like Mull and Iona, up to 75% of residents are presently in fuel poverty.

- 7.4 Housing:** The Strategic Housing Investment Plan delivered 75 new affordable housing units between 1st April 2017 and 31st March 2018. 2018/19 will be the third year of the increased spend for housing and the third year of five in aiming for 35,000 social houses built in Scotland. The message I am giving to all RSLs is clear - keep the accelerator on to build more houses in Argyll and Bute. It's important that the full Council is behind the build programme and our aim is to build 760 units over the next five years.

I am pleased to say that we had been approached by the Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust (HSCHT) earlier this year about their plans to expand beyond the Highland Council area. They gave a presentation to the SHIP Operational Group and all the RSLs and Scottish Government were happy that the HSCHT were looking to base a worker in Argyll given their proven track record of delivering innovative housing solutions for communities in the Highlands. I look forward to working with them to provide housing in our communities.

- 7.5 Scotland's Energy Efficiency Programme (SEEP):** a Scottish District Heating loan has been approved for a ground source heat pump district heating system for Iona village in partnership with Iona Renewables. This scheme can now proceed after the Scottish Government confirmed that there is no requirement for a loan guarantor. The district heating system will provide a new heating system to 36 properties on the island.

- 7.6 Homelessness:** 374 homeless applications were recorded across Argyll and Bute during the period from 1st April to 31st December 2017. This represents an increase of 37 applications (11%) on the same period in 2016/17. While some areas such as Bute, Cowal and Lorn have seen a reduction in applications the biggest increase in applications has been in Helensburgh and Lomond where there has been an increase of 38 applications (42%) compared to the same period in 2016/17.

- 7.7 Tenancy Support:** The Council Housing Services continues to provide tenancy support through contracts with Carr Gomm and HELP. Providing tenancy support can have positive impacts on peoples' lives. Every main town in Argyll and Bute offers a housing drop-in service through the tenancy support contracts and tenancy support providers offer advice and support on various housing related topics. As well as drop-in facilities, tenancy support is offered on a one to one support basis and this has worked very well to help people remain in their tenancy after a difficult time and also resettle into the community. At 31st December there were 236 households receiving tenancy support across Argyll and Bute.

7.8 Welfare Rights: The income generated from 1st April to 31st December 2017 totals £2.13m which is projected to achieve the full year target of £2.5m. 1319 referrals were received for the period from 1st April to 31st December 2017 which is a 15% increase on the previous year.

7.9 Gaelic: Much time has been spent on drawing up the Council's new Gaelic Plan and I had consultations with a number of communities and organisations. We had good written responses from the public during the consultation period and the Gaelic Plan for 2018/22 was approved by the Community Services Committee last month and is now before the Council for approval.

A commitment was made at our inaugural Gaelic Gathering in August 2016 that this event would be held bi-annually and preparations will now start to stage the event in autumn of this year.

8. POLICY LEAD FOR EDUCATION – Councillor Yvonne McNeilly

8.1 INEA: A big focus for the education Service has been the action plan following the INEA inspection. A return visit took place in September 2017 and an updated report from Education Scotland was published on the 12th of December. I am delighted with the progress that has been made indicating significant improvements within the service.

The following points were made in the report:

- Overall, in the past 12 months, the Authority has made some important improvements in achieving positive outcomes for its children and young people. Across the Authority, staff recognise that they need to continue to work together effectively to ensure that these improvements are sustained.
- Whilst the Authority is increasing its use and understanding of data, it is aware that it now needs to build evidence over time to support analysis of important trends.
- Central officers now engage much more effectively and with greater consistency with schools. School visits are more regular, well-planned and have an agreed purpose, ensuring that key local and national priorities are considered.
- The Authority has made some positive early progress in improving relationships and communication whilst promoting a more positive ethos amongst all stakeholders. Continued effort is needed to ensure that current improvements are fully embedded and sustained.

The progress made in the last 18 months has been down to the continued focus on improvement from both central officers and schools.

8.2 Early Learning and Childcare: A major focus for Scottish Government is the implementation of 1140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare by August 2020. This is one of the biggest developments currently facing Scotland and has many implications for Local Authorities. There is much work to be done to ensure that provisions are in place including capital and revenue spend. The whole programme is dependent on adequate funding being made available to each Local Authority. The development of a quality workforce is also paramount.

The Education Service is currently planning with partners on how to meet the demands of an enhanced workforce. The Service is currently working in partnership with Argyll and Bute's Learning and Development Team, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and secondary schools across the Authority to deliver a Foundation Apprenticeship in Social Services Children and Young People (SSCYP). There will be 10 places available initially, starting in August 2018. Timetabled into students' choices for S5 and S6, year 1 will comprise 5 units towards the national progression award and year 2 will include nursery placements for 1 day each week.

The service submitted a delivery plan in November 2017 to Scottish Government. As outlined within the delivery plan, 11 ELC Services in Argyll and Bute are now delivering 1140 hours from 15th January 2018.

These include:

- 3 Childminding Services;
- 5 Local Authority Services, and
- 3 Partner Providers

Quality is at the heart of our vision for 1140 hours and I am delighted that the latest care inspector reports have highlighted improved grades for Local Authority settings across Argyll and Bute, with 96% of ELC settings graded at 4 or above at the end of January 2018. The inspection team highlighted increased expectations within inspections over the past year and were pleased to see an increase in the number of settings achieving grades of 4 and above. They also stressed that it was a significant achievement to maintain grades of 5. Thank you to all our teams for working so hard to improve outcomes for our children!

8.3 Appointment of Head of Education: Following the appointments committee interview process on Thursday 29th of March, I am pleased to confirm that Anne Paterson (Currently Acting Head of Education) and Louise Connor (currently Education Manager with Argyll and Bute Council) were appointed to the two Head of Education posts. All of the candidates went through a thorough two day interview process involving an

assessment centre and series of professional and technical interviews before culminating in the appointments committee interview. I am sure you will want to join me in congratulating the two officers on their achievement.

- 8.4 100 Year Celebration of Catholic Education:** 2018 is the centenary of the 1918 Education Act. This was the Act that saw Catholic schools transfer from Diocesan control to State governance. It is a chance to mark publicly the ways in which Catholic schools are not just good for Catholics, but good for Scotland.

Diocese, schools, parishes and local communities will be marking this special year in a variety of ways.

Along with the Provost and other councillor colleagues, I enjoyed a very happy visit to Oban on Monday 26th March for a celebratory Mass conducted by Bishop Brian McGhee, as part of the centenary celebrations. Children from St Mun's, Dunoon, St Andrew's, Bute and St Columba's in Oban played a big part in the mass, accompanied by their parents, helpers and teachers. It was a lovely occasion and I very much appreciate the huge input our faith schools bring to education in Argyll and Bute.

- 8.5 Recruitment:** The Service is currently undertaking the staffing exercise for 2018/19 and have managed to ensure that teaching posts are being released for advert and recruitment as early as possible. It is vital that Argyll and Bute attracts the best quality teachers to our schools to ensure that the children and young people receive quality learning and teaching opportunities.

I am delighted to announce that Argyll and Bute Council have been selected as one of four councils to enter into a new Post Graduate Diploma in Education (Secondary) with the University of Dundee and University of the Highlands and Islands. This brand new course is an entry path into teaching of STEM subjects and looks at a distance learning model

- 8.6 Gaelic Education Award:** Bowmore Primary has been shortlisted as a finalist in the Scottish Education Awards for 2018 in the category for Gaelic. The award recognises early learning and childcare settings and schools that have developed a vibrant and progressive culture and climate of continuous innovation in relation to Gaelic Medium and Gaelic Learner Education.

The culture and ethos of establishments nominated for this award category should promote respect, ambition and achievement in Gaelic Education while improving outcomes for all learners in ways which eliminate inequity.

- 8.7 Digital Learning:** Argyll and Bute Council's Digital Learning team has a lending bank of exciting devices to support the education of children and young people in technology and its career potential. We are able to provide a wide array of technologies to schools and teachers including a really interesting drone. The SPRK+ is a small, sturdy and spherical drone that can be either freely driven or programmed. The programming aspect is where the education aspect primarily lies, and the potential of the SPRK+ can be showcased when used in conjunction with a SPRK+ mat, which provides challenges for pupils to program and follow a path, or perform actions such as changing colour, or even answer maths questions by directing the SPRK+ to the right answer. This type of learning technology provides new and exciting challenges for our young people and introduces them to new career opportunities.
- 8.8 Literacy:** In January 2018, we launched a Northern Alliance Literacy Pilot which involved 6 schools across Argyll and Bute. This project involves P1 classes and the approaches share many similarities with our guidance. Clare Bryden, Literacy PT, has been liaising with James Cook, Northern Alliance Lead Officer, who provided training in February. The schools currently taking part in this pilot are, Rockfield, Glassary, Tayvallich, Kirn, Rothesay, St Muns and Strachur. A wide range of useful resources from Northern Alliance for Literacy are available. This is good example of how the Northern Alliance Regional Collaborative is adding value to our schools.
- 8.9 Numeracy:** We have successfully been awarded £6000 from Education Scotland as part of the National Numeracy and Mathematics Hub grant, in response to the work being undertaken within the Authority on Numeracy. Education Scotland commented favourably on the collaborative work we have undertaken with West Dunbartonshire Council and are also interested in finding out more about 'Talking Maths', developed by the Early Years Team.
- 8.10 School Achievements:** Well done to the P1 class of Kirn Primary School for winning second place in the National French drama competition. Languages 1+2 has been a focus across our schools to meet the national requirements and this is a wonderful example of some of the work being undertaken.

Furnace Primary school has begun a brand new Family Story Club in partnership with the wider community. Volunteers came in to experience and share their story reading skills on a one to one basis with pupils from Minard and Furnace Primary schools. This is a fantastic example of literacy work involving the wider community.

Environmental charity, Keep Scotland Beautiful, has announced that pupils from Easdale Primary School have been selected as winners of the

nationwide competition to Design a One Planet Picnic Pocket Garden – which will see them now bring their creations to life for display at the Gardening Scotland exhibition in Edinburgh in June 2018

- 8.11 Pupil Equity Funding:** Argyll and Bute Council's Community Service Committee has welcomed the allocation in 2018/19 of £1.4 million to schools in the area through the Scottish Government's Pupil Equity Fund (PEF).

The fund aims to improve the educational outcomes of children affected by poverty. There is currently a gap between the educational progress made by those living in Scotland's least and most deprived areas, often known as the 'attainment gap.'

Schools in Argyll and Bute have focused resources to addressing the gaps within literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.

- 8.12 New Schools – Campbeltown and Oban:** It was a historic occasion in Argyll and Bute when secondary pupils from across Kintyre moved into the new Campbeltown Grammar School. It is also the start of a new era of high expectations in which everyone associated with the school - parents, teachers, and partners - will work together to ensure that our children and young people aspire to achieve the best they can in school and to have success and fulfilment in their lives beyond school.

Campbeltown Grammar School has a proud tradition of community engagement and this has shaped the school ethos.

The £26 million, three-storey school has capacity to cater for up to 500 pupils and will provide young people with a modern learning environment fit for the 21st century. Outside, it will also feature a 3G sports pitch, music pavilion and large car park on the site of the existing 1960s school buildings, once they are demolished.

Campbeltown Grammar School is the second of four education facilities we will deliver for Argyll and Bute Council and hub North Scotland. Last November pupils and teachers moved into Kirn Primary School.

Oban High School is the next facility due to be completed this spring and excellent progress is being made on the site of Dunoon Primary School. A huge amount of work has been done and my sincere thanks go to all involved. I am looking forward to visiting both schools in the very near future.

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

9.1 Planning Performance Framework 2016/17: Our Planning Performance Framework (PPF) for 2016/17, which is the principal performance measure for Development Management and Development Policy within Planning and Regulatory Services, was submitted to the Scottish Government in July 2017 and covered the period from April 2016 to March 2017. This was the 6th Annual PPF which our Planning Service has had to submit and once again feedback from the Scottish Government has been positive and has confirmed that our planning service has an 'open for business' approach to sustainable economic growth. Of the 15 Key Performance Markers used by the Scottish Government to assess the performance of an authority Argyll and Bute scored Red = 1, Amber = 3 and Green = 11

A detailed report on the PPF was presented to the March meeting of the PPSL committee where after consideration of the report it was agreed to publicise the positive feedback from the independent review.

9.2 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.

In January the annual update of the DPS was reported to and approved by the PPSL Committee. It was noted that there had been no significant changes to the updated DPS and although there has been some adjustment to timing the LDP2 process remains on target for delivery within the specified 5 year period.

Since the second DPS the Development Policy Team have undertaken the following actions in the LDP2 process:-

- Published the updated DPS Jan 2017
- Internal assessment of current land supply
- Call for Sites – assessment of new proposed sites
- external engagement with Key Agencies and other key stakeholders
- Call for Ideas and Place Standard Tool public consultation
- Community Council sessions
- Councillor Workshop
- Strategic Environmental Assessment – scoped and draft Environmental Report prepared
- Equalities Impact Assessment – Draft Rapid Impact Assessment prepared
- Main Issues Report consultation for 8 weeks, including 4 Community

- Council meetings, 5 public Drop in events, publicity – including social media, use of interactive storymap, on line form.
- Monitoring Report published

Members will now have the opportunity to discuss the Main Issues Report findings through a workshop/Business days before the preparation and publication of the Proposed Local Development Plan for public consultation in November/December 2018. Find the plan at <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/ldp2>

- 9.3 Advertisement and Signage Guidance – Follow Up Enforcement:** In September 2017 PPSL Committee adopted the Advertisement and Signage Policy Technical Working Note and in addition identified that resources for enforcement of A-boards should, in the first instance, be focussed upon the town centres of Dunoon, Helensburgh and Oban.

The latter element was expected to be the subject of a project plan for approval by PPSL in Dec 17/Jan 18. However as initial survey work undertaken in Oban and Dunoon during the winter period has raised concern that it is not reflective of the scale of the issue during the summer months and as such precludes discussion with Roads and Transport Scotland in relation to the resources required and to establish whether these can be committed it is now intended to undertake baseline surveys during late Spring and prepare a project plan for consideration of PPSL Committee in late Summer 2018.

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
10th April 2018**

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