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**28<sup>th</sup> June 2018**

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**LEADER'S REPORT**

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1** This report gives colleagues an update on my activities as Leader of Argyll and Bute Council from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 8<sup>th</sup> June 2018. It also includes an update in relation to my Policy Lead portfolio, Economic Development.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1** Members are asked to consider the report,
- 2.2** Members are asked to note that the full Leader's Report Pack is available in the Leader's office. This includes COSLA and other papers and briefings as referenced in the report. Any items discussed in public can be provided to members electronically; the papers for items taken in private session can be reviewed in the Leader's office.

**3. MEETING WITH CABINET SECRETARY FOR COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL SECURITY AND EQUALITIES, ANGELA CONSTANCE – 10<sup>th</sup> April 2018**

- 3.1** I had the opportunity to discuss a very wide range of issues with the Cabinet Secretary in a positive and constructive session in Helensburgh on 10<sup>th</sup> April.

The ongoing Local Governance Review, and the Chief Executive's proactive programme of community engagement events, was of particular interest to Ms Constance and we were able to give her some of the feedback received so far from our communities. At the time of the meeting and, indeed, of writing this report, the programme is still ongoing, but from an early stage it has been clear that local people have very diverse views in relation to the power they want over decision making and involvement.

I was able to highlight the success of our Supporting Communities Fund participatory budgeting project – over 4,500 people voted across the whole area resulting in 57 community groups receiving funding for local projects.

We also touched on Argyll and Bute's Rural Growth Deal. While progress on this has moved on significantly since the April meeting, Ms Constance did indicate her willingness to help us address and tackle the challenges that we face. The support we have had from the Cabinet Secretary and other parliamentarians has been and will be invaluable as we progress our Deal.

Later the same day, 10<sup>th</sup> April, I caught up with Jackie Baillie MSP. While the focus here was largely on local matters, again this was an opportunity to reinforce the Rural Growth Deal message to another parliamentarian and build up support.

#### **4. ARGYLL AND BUTE PARLIAMENTARY FORUM – SECOND SESSION, 18<sup>th</sup> April 2018**

- 4.1** Supported by the Executive Director for Development and Infrastructure, I met with several regional and constituency MSPs for the second Argyll and Bute Parliamentary Forum.



We discussed enterprise and skills support for Argyll and Bute – colleagues will recall that one of the priorities agreed by council was to secure single agency support for the entire Argyll and Bute area. Work on this is ongoing and officers have held meetings with colleagues in the Scottish Government and both enterprise agencies, but having a further opportunity for political discussion at the forum is invaluable as we work through what is potentially a very complex process.

MSPs were also largely supportive of our focus on Argyll and Bute's transport infrastructure, and I have commented elsewhere in this report on

my correspondence in this regard with the Minister for Transport and Islands.

We also gave the parliamentarians a further update on Rural Growth Deal progress and they indicated that a dedicated forum session focusing entirely on the Deal, timed to allow their input into our reporting process, would be helpful. Again with the support of Michael Russell and Jackie Baillie, this is now in MSPs diaries for 12<sup>th</sup> September.

## **5. TELECONFERENCE WITH MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND ISLANDS, 25<sup>th</sup> April 2018**

- 5.1** In March this year I wrote to Humza Yousaf, Minister for Transport and Islands, to ask for his support in jointly establishing a working group to focus on all aspects of transport infrastructure and connections, with a view to driving forward improvement.

On 25<sup>th</sup> April we were able to speak by video-conference. We had an extremely productive discussion and I'm delighted to report that the Minister welcomed our approach and agreed to look at setting up this dedicated working group.

There are several different agencies who each play crucial parts in keeping Argyll and Bute moving, and we believe that bringing key players together is the best way to tackle issues like maintaining lifeline trunk routes, operating ferry and rail services, and providing flights to and from the rest of the country.

We have provided the Minister with a list of potential working group members and his office have committed to finding a date for a meeting. This group can play a significant part in a number of key issues for us – feeding into the National Transport Strategy Review, considering future priorities as well as current matters, and in the context of our Rural Growth Deal work.

At the time of writing we have not received a confirmed date from the Minister but I am due to be in touch with him again soon and will press for this once more, given its significance to Argyll and Bute and its economic success.

## **6. COSLA LEADERS, 27<sup>th</sup> April 2018**

- 6.1** I attended the April Leaders session at COSLA with the Chief Executive. The following matters were discussed in private session:
- Scotland's Energy Efficiency Programme – an address from Kevin Stewart MSP, Minister for Local Government and Housing

- Funding the Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare
- Distribution
- Spending Review
- Strategic Review of Improvement Service
- Public Health Priorities

All reports and associated briefings can be reviewed in the Leader's Report Pack.

## **7. DEPOPULATION IN WESTERN SCOTTISH LOCAL AUTHORITY AREAS - meeting with Leaders, 27<sup>th</sup> April 2018**

- 7.1** National Records of Scotland (NRS) published its latest population figures for the country in March. Given our own focus on population growth, I was keen to examine these new statistics – and was interested to note a clear trend in relation to depopulation along Scotland's west coast local authority areas. This trend can't easily be attributed to rural, urban or any other obvious common factor, and further exploration, sharing of ideas and discussion would be helpful.

I contacted the leaders of the other western authorities – Inverclyde, East, North and South Ayrshires, nan Eilean Siar, Inverclyde, Dumfries and Galloway and our neighbours in West Dunbartonshire – to get their views on the merits of getting together to focus on this very crucial issue. We agreed to meet after COSLA Leaders on 27<sup>th</sup> April. Chief Executives were tasked with working together on reports and information for a second session, which is now in leaders' diaries for 29<sup>th</sup> June. This is a cross-party approach and it is helpful to be able to work in partnership with fellow councils on a matter of such importance. This work is in its early stages but I will keep members updated; I would expect our second session in June will highlight our way forward in more detail.

## **8. WW100 COMMEMORATIONS, ISLAY – 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> May 2018**

- 8.1** Members will be well aware of the WW100 Commemorative Events held on Islay on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> May. This high profile event attracted national politicians as well as HRH Princess Royal, who attended at the War Memorial Service on the Friday.

Officers from services across the council put in sterling efforts to ensure that the programme ran smoothly – no mean feat given the logistics required to support national politicians and royalty, as well as managing hundreds of visitors and national media attention. Their insistence on excellence and the utmost professionalism served to highlight to an international audience our beautiful area as well as the high standards we strive for. Thanks are due

to all involved for a very professional and positive performance ideally suited to such a poignant commemoration.

## **9. MEETING WITH DAVID MUNDELL MP, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND – 4<sup>th</sup> May 2018**

- 9.1** The Secretary of State's attendance at the Islay commemoration events offered another opportunity to strengthen relationships and maintain bonds of support for our Rural Growth Deal. The Chief Executive and I met with Mr Mundell on the morning of Friday 4<sup>th</sup> May, ahead of the commemorative service later that day. Our Rural Growth Deal ambitions are very familiar to Mr Mundell, who has been supportive from the start; this meeting was no exception and we remain encouraged by his positive approach. It's understood that he may visit the area again later this year, so I have written to him to indicate we will be delighted to welcome him to Argyll and Bute and have further discussions as our Deal work progresses.

## **10. VISIT TO BUTE/REFUGEE PROGRAMME, 8<sup>th</sup> May 2018**

- 10.1** It was a real pleasure to have my first meeting with our Syrian refugee families on Bute on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2018.

Our first stop was a tour of Rothesay Joint Campus, under the guidance of three of our Syrian pupils. It was really helpful to see the children's progress at all levels – pre-5, primary and secondary – and they are undoubtedly making a very bright and vibrant contribution to campus life. We ended our visit to the school with a short focus group session with some of the secondary school pupils and their Scottish friends to discuss their experiences of integration and their ambitions for the future.

We then visited the Phoenix Centre where a Syrian couple are volunteering and training for qualifications to open up opportunities in social care – a really inspiring and humbling visit.

There was a quick stop at the new business premises where one family are due to open a specialist patisserie – by the time council considers this report the bakery will have officially opened and I wish them every success.

Finally there was a chance to join an English language class and chat with the learners before leaving the island.

This really is a success story for our council and other local authorities are looking to us as a model of excellent practice in terms of resettlement.

## **11. ARGYLL AND BUTE HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PARTNERSHIP/INTEGRATION JOINT BOARD**

- 11.1** Members will recall that council, in April, agreed changes to the representation on the Argyll and Bute HSCP IJB. Along with Cllrs Mulvaney and Taylor, I was appointed to join Cllr Green on the board as the council's four representatives.

Cllr Green, as the Policy Lead and board vice-chair, has covered health and social matters in detail in his own report, but I felt it was important to note a couple of matters here following my appointment.

I arranged a meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> May to bring strategic leadership of all three organisations – the council, NHS Highland and the partnership – together to discuss the current position of the HSCP and how we move forward to deliver the improvements that are needed.

There is no quick fix and there is much work to do. This meeting witnessed some robust discussions – but ultimately positive ones. All agreed that there is value and merit in coming together to focus on improving this vital service area, and we have agreed to meet together at least on a quarterly basis. A programme for 2018 is already in diaries.

Along with Cllrs Mulvaney and Taylor, I attended my first meeting of the IJB as a council representative on 30<sup>th</sup> May. I had also attended the West of Scotland Health and Social Care Delivery Plan engagement event in Clydebank on 11<sup>th</sup> May – a useful opportunity to engage with other partnerships and representatives.

## **12. HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS LEADERS GROUP, 24<sup>th</sup> May 2018**

- 12.1** Leaders of the Highlands and islands local authorities came together the evening before COSLA Leaders to discuss a range of issues affecting the region – including a paper on Brexit and Regional Policy for the Highlands and Islands prepared by our own Economic Growth Manager.

Other agenda items included opening a new dialogue with Highlands and Islands Enterprise; the Islands Bill Stage 3; engagement with ministers and opposition MSPs; and the role and purpose of the HILG. It was agreed that there is value in the group meeting together and acting together, and a programme is now in place based around COSLA and COHI, where all leaders are due to be present.

### **13. COSLA LEADERS, 25<sup>th</sup> May 2018**

**13.1** May's COSLA meeting had a very full agenda, with reports on the following topics considered by Leaders:

- Educational Psychologists
- Access to sanitary products in schools
- Brexit update
- Local Governance Review
- School Clothing Grants
- Education Bill
- National Care Home Contract
- Local Taxation
- Distribution

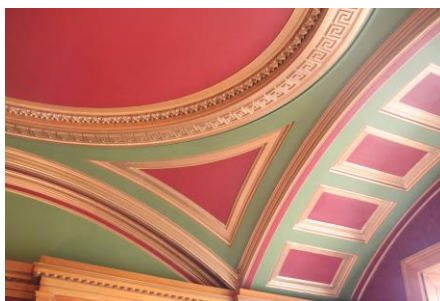
All reports and briefings are included for review in the Leader's Report Pack.

### **14. ARGYLL AND BUTE ECONOMIC FORUM, 4<sup>th</sup> June 2018**

**14.1** The Argyll and Bute Economic Forum held its final meeting on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> June. At the invitation of the owners, Keith and Denice Punler, the forum met in Castle Toward, near Dunoon.

Alongside updates from the Forum's sector representatives – including tourism and food/drink – and contributions from partner organisations, there was a presentation from the new MD of the Mount Stuart Trust, Colin Boag, an update from Argyll College UHI Deputy Principal Elaine Munro and an update on promotion and campaigning activity from Argyll and the Isles Tourism Co-operative.

Mr and Mrs Punler gave forum members a tour of the castle – while there is still much work to be done, there is very clear and significant evidence of transformation already. They are determined to restore the property sensitively and carefully with impressive attention to detail and it is great to see the building coming back to life.



*Many original features are being restored including this cornice work*



*With Forum Chair, Nick Ferguson, at Castle Toward*

Forum chair, Nick Ferguson, had prepared the forum's final report which was considered by the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> June. Members will now know that the forum has paved the way for a new Argyll and Bute Business Group, and I'm looking forward to seeing this new partnership coming to life and thriving, making a valuable contribution to Argyll and Bute's economic growth just as the forum has done over its three-year life span.

Thanks are due to Nick Ferguson for his adept, committed and focused steering of the Forum – his hard work and enthusiasm has been invaluable.

## **15. POLICY LEAD FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

**15.1 Argyll and Bute's Rural Growth Deal:** The Rural Growth Deal Steering Board met on 9<sup>th</sup> May at which the emerging growth deal vision, themes, projects and communication plan were discussed. In addition, the draft P&R paper and associated appendices were presented for comments prior to the proposed sign off at the Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2018.

All members had the opportunity to hear from David McIntosh from the Scottish Futures Trust at a members seminar on the Rural Growth Deal on 14<sup>th</sup> May.

Following approval at P and R, the priority now is to establish full governance of the programme and identify all resources required, including external parties, involved in bringing forward projects.



A community consultation on the Deal launched on 4<sup>th</sup> June and will run until 10<sup>th</sup> August. Work is also continuing on feasibility studies and forming of partnerships to develop the key project themes and/or specific projects.

Officers are in the process of arranging a number of meetings and workshops with key private sector stakeholders, the Enterprise Agencies and Skills Development Scotland to understand the skills requirements of the regions key sectors and potential links with the deal. A workshop focusing on the skills requirements of the tourism and food and drink sector took place on 31<sup>st</sup> May in Helensburgh and it is intended that similar sessions will be arranged for sectors such as aquaculture, marine sciences, defence and engineering.

Political engagement with both governments continues apace; I have noted above the dedicated Parliamentary Forum session in September which will allow MSPs to contribute to the process, and in this and previous reports I have commented on meetings with various Scottish and UK national politicians.

We are also currently actively seeking meetings with David Mundell, Lord Iain Duncan, and a joint session with Keith Brown and Derek MacKay. Approaches have been made and while there are no confirmed details at the time of writing I will keep members up to date on progress. I will also be arranging individual meetings with our two constituency MSPs ahead of the September parliamentary forum, and at the time of writing am due to meet with Brendan O'Hara MP on 18<sup>th</sup> June.

It is still intended to submit a formal Rural Growth Deal bid submission to both governments in time for this to be considered in their 2018 budgets (November and December of this year).

- 15.2 Helensburgh Charrette:** Helensburgh was identified for a community-led design process by PPSL in 2015 to inform the LDP at a local level, and which is currently identified as a growth area within LDP2.

The Making Places initiatives represent a broadening of Scottish Government's (SG) charrette programme, which seek more of a grass roots up approach to place based design. The Helensburgh Making Places project is funded by SG (£15k) and matched by existing council budgets (£15k).

Ice Cream Architecture, a consultant design team with various specialisms, has been commissioned to engage the community in active discussion at all levels through the facilitation of activities, workshops and events to deliver the project between now and August 2018.

The project will focus on exploring opportunity for economic growth, and aims to develop channels of communication with harder to reach communities and to promote community cohesion, within a context of the emerging Maritime Change Programme.

- 15.3 Tarbert and Lochgilphead Regeneration Fund:** The Gleaner oil site phase one is now fully funded following a successful LEADER bid. Contract for work has been awarded and on-site work has started, including the ongoing clearing of oil tanks.

Ardrishaig pier's £1.5m investment works are also on site and the commodity sourcing strategy for Lochgilphead Front Green is complete.

**15.4 Digital Connectivity:**

Broadband: April saw over 89% of premises connected to the fibre network with over 81% able to access speeds greater than 24Mbps. Only 10.7% are still on a standard ADSL connection.

HIE have indicated that the current fibre rollout will continue until September 2019. At this point they estimate that 85% of premises will have been connected to the fibre network.

Mobile: - Work on the EE ESN network is continuing to progress, out of the 52 sites currently built 11 of these are on air with the rest to follow in the coming months. With the Home Office deadline rapidly approaching EE are now looking at temporary installation solutions to allow the network to be activated.

BT Digital Discussions: Meetings have taken place during May with BT to discuss how best to move forward with digital investment and what BT can potentially do for Argyll and Bute, taking in the potential Digital Culture Media and Sport Local Full Fibre Network challenge fund.

- 15.5 ABRA and All Energy, May 2018:** Along with officers from Economic Development, I attended Argyll and Bute Renewables Alliance and the All Energy conference in Glasgow during May. This included Dr Simon Gill from the Scottish Government, focusing on the future development of grid infrastructure and smart grid opportunities. All Energy in particular offered opportunities for the council to engage with key renewables partners and raise our profile in this key sector, along with a wide range of local businesses who also benefited from the opportunity to meet with potential investors.

**15.6 Business Gateway:** Business Gateway Argyll and Bute has achieved the top ranking in Scotland for meeting customer services – and, in all nine categories, as rated by the people and companies who use the service, the local team has scored higher than the national average. These are great results and their professionalism and commitment is invaluable as we work on attracting more people to live, work, invest and do business in Argyll and Bute. Congratulations to the team on their achievement.

During May and the first half of June this year, the team have registered six new clients to the programme, bringing it to a total of 90, with a further two pending registrations. Seven growth grant and one key sector grant applications have been approved, and the team continue to deliver specialist advice sessions alongside a programme of training and workshops for new and existing businesses operating across Argyll and Bute.

### **15.7 Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands Business Visits – May 2018**

After visiting companies on Mull last autumn, I took the opportunity to meet with businesses in the Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands area during May, accompanied by the Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure. Engagement with the private sector is very significant in terms of growing Argyll and Bute's population and economy and it is helpful to meet with local companies and build on those relationships. I am frequently impressed by the diversity of industry across the whole area and MAKI is no exception.

As well as a visit with Tarbert Harbour Authority, we had very productive discussions with the Mellex Group and Midton Acrylics – both of which have serious ambitions for growth – and it is exciting to hear about companies with real plans to expand their offer.

We will be planning more meetings with other local businesses across the whole area over the course of the year and if any member has a particular company in mind who they think would appreciate a discussion, I will be happy to hear from them.

## **16. CONCLUSION**

**16.1** This report highlights my recent activities as Leader of Argyll and Bute Council, together with a brief update on my Policy Lead portfolio. I hope that this update is helpful for members and will be happy to provide more information wherever possible.

The full Leader's report pack can be viewed in the Leader's office at any time.

## **17. IMPLICATIONS**

- 17.1 Policy - None**
- 17.2 Financial – None**
- 17.3 Legal – None**
- 17.4 HR – None**
- 17.5 Equalities – None**
- 17.6 Risk – None**
- 17.7 Customer Service – None**

**Councillor Aileen Morton**

**Leader, Argyll and Bute Council and Policy Lead for Economic Development**

**18<sup>th</sup> June 2018**

**For further information or to access the Leader's Report Pack please contact Aileen McNicol, Leadership Support and Member Services Manager, telephone 01546 604014 or email [aileen.mcnicol@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:aileen.mcnicol@argyll-bute.gov.uk)**