

27th September 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. The last update was provided to Council at its meeting on 28th June; this report covers the period from that date until 10th September 2018, and takes in the July recess period.

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 Capital Regeneration during July to September. I have held regular meetings and discussions with a range of officers across the policy briefs.
- 3.2 **Strategic Finance:** Following recess, I met with Kirsty Flanagan, Head of Strategic Finance and discussed matters relating to completion of the year end 17/18 accounts and audit; the August outturn; the 19/20 budget process and timetable; national pay awards and potential changes around supporting people monies and the flooring mechanism for GAE. The changed accounting treatment of the HSCP's finances (with a current £2.4m overspend) and its impact on the overall council forecast overspend of

£2.8m for 18/19 was recently reported to the Policy and Resources Committee and is of serious concern for the council. In simple terms, if the HSCP do not manage to sufficiently reduce their forecast overspend, the council may need to consider how *we reduce our own budget*, so the overall consolidated position balances.

3.3 Capital Regeneration:

Helensburgh Waterfront Development: In June the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee approved the End Stage Report (Developed Design) for this flagship project, which it is proposed will: deliver improvements to the flood defences on the site; provide a new leisure centre, including a six lane 25metre swimming pool, training pool and multi-function fitness suites; extend the public realm improvements already delivered through the capital regeneration programme in Helensburgh Town centre; reconfigure car, coach and taxi parking within the site; and enable us to demolish the current Leisure Centre thereby freeing up space for future development by others, including the potential for: retail/commercial development; and a new skate-park/playpark.



The formal Planning Application was submitted by the Project Team in July and, following validation of the application by the Planning Authority, it is expected that it will come before the PPSL Committee in the Autumn. Without seeking to pre-judge any decision that the Planning Authority might come to, the Project Team is now focussed on developing the Stage 4 Technical Design and the staged submissions for the relevant Building Warrant Application, as well as Marine Construction Licences.



This does mean that the Project Team is working across two fronts simultaneously in that they will not only be replying to any queries raised by the Planning Authority, but will also as appropriate look to incorporate any emerging directions/guidance from the relevant statutory bodies e.g. Argyll and Bute Council, SEPA, and Marine Scotland into the developing Stage 4 Design.

Dunoon Queen's Hall: I visited this project and toured the facility at the start of July as the main construction works were being completed and handed back to the council for fit-out, staff migration and familiarisation.



Since opening to the public on 26 July 2018 the Queens Hall has hosted a number of music/entertainment events, along with the services provided by the public library; fitness suites, café and meeting rooms. The refurbishment of the building has generally been very well received by locals and visitors alike, and the initial data from Live Argyll, notwithstanding that there is always a 'honeymoon' period when any new facility opens, would suggest that co-locating a number of complimentary services will pay dividends in the long term.



The new soft play suite

Early statistics show that 15 new jobs have been created, 3900 patrons attended events in the first week, Dunoon hosted the Euro Water Skiing championships, 45 fitness classes per week took place with over 900 people attending and library visits doubled to 6900 this August compared to last year.

Rothesay Pavilion: I was able to visit the Pavilion during the summer recess, and to see for myself the challenges that the buildings listed status and constrained location will pose to the refurbishment works over the next year. The construction works associated with the refurbishment of this iconic building continue apace with the Principal Contractor, CBC (Glasgow) Ltd having been on site since the beginning of the year.



The project is currently 38 weeks through an 87 weeks construction programme, which is scheduled to see works complete in July 2019, with the building re-opening to the public in October of the same year. The Council's Regeneration Project Manager left to take up a new position with HIE in May, and his replacement took up post in the middle of July. At the same time, and purely coincidental, the CEO/Artistic Director of the Rothesay Pavilion Charitable Trust left to take up a new position in Cornwall, where they were originally from, and her replacement takes up post in September. Whilst there may not be anything unique about the specific issues that the project will have to deal with, the combination of the building's island location and its lack of internal access for major items of construction equipment, materials, and the workforce, will mean that the project delivery team will have to come up with some unique solutions.

- 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 late August, along with the Leader, Chief Executive and business leaders, I attended a dinner with the Secretary of State for Scotland, David Mundell MP to discuss our rural growth deal and Brexit. I followed that up with a meeting with him the next day to more fully explain the importance of a rural growth deal for communities across Argyll and Bute.

In September, I attended COSLA Leaders' meeting in Forfar, Angus going to both the civic reception the evening before and the formal meeting. It is important that we continue to lobby for parity across all staff groups and a fully funded pay award for both teachers and other local government colleagues.

4. POLICY LEAD FOR CORPORATE SERVICES – Councillor Rory Colville

- 4.1 Introduction:** I have meetings with the Executive Director of Customer Services and the Heads of Service approximately every 6 weeks to discuss matters relating to my remit. At time of writing the most recent meeting was held on 26 July 2018 and the next one is scheduled for 5 September 2018. These meetings act as a useful forum to discuss any issues and to brief me on any Corporate Services related matters.

4.2 Governance and Law:

Polling District Review

The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 requires Argyll and Bute Council to undertake a review, between the dates of 1st October 2018 and 31st January 2020, of polling districts and polling places within the Argyll and Bute UK Parliamentary Constituency for the purposes of UK Parliamentary and Local Government elections. The polling districts and polling places were last reviewed in Argyll and Bute in 2015. The aims of the review are to seek to ensure that:-

- i. All the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances; and
- ii. So far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places are accessible to all electors, including those who may have a disability.

The review will run from Monday 1st October 2018 and all representations must be submitted by 10th December 2018 by email to elections@argyll-bute.gov.uk. The Council welcomes relevant comments from residents in Argyll and Bute, and any individuals or bodies who have a particular expertise in relation to the use of premises or facilities for those who have

different forms of ability or disability. Political parties, existing elected representatives and other interested parties are also invited to contribute.

Draft proposals for the revised scheme of Polling Districts and Polling Places together with a statement of reasons will then be published and final recommendations will be presented to full Council on 21st February 2019. Once the Council has agreed the proposals, the new polling districts and polling places will be made available to the public and the Register of Electors will take into account any changes made.

Customer Service Excellence (CSE) Reaccreditation

Governance and Law have once again successfully been reaccredited for the CSE Award, gaining an additional compliance plus, which gives a total of seven criteria now rated at the highest possible level.

CSE is a practical tool for driving customer focussed change within an organisation and assesses a service/departments capabilities in relation to customer focussed service delivery, identifying areas and methods for improvement.

4.3 Improvement and HR:

Fairer Scotland Duty

The Council has new responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 which are known as the Fairer Scotland Duty. The main area of change for us is the requirement to take into consideration the socio-economic impact of all major decisions that we as a Council take. The Improvement and HR Service have worked to integrate this, as well as our duties under the Islands Act, into a new Equality and Socio Economic Impact Assessment. This was the subject of a Members' Seminar session on 13th August. Members have a responsibility to consider these impacts when making strategic decisions and to enquire of officers about the socio economic impact of the recommended proposal. This new approach will support the council in making decisions that have carefully considered the needs of those most disadvantaged in our communities.

Wellbeing

At the recent Policy and Resources Committee, members noted the rise in sickness absence amongst Council employees in 2017/18. In part this can be attributed to the flu outbreak and an increase in medical, long term absence, but it also indicates that there are ongoing issues with stress related absence.

The Improvement and HR Service has initiated a programme of 'Mental Health First Aiders'. These employees undertake training on a voluntary basis and make themselves known in workplaces as people who can be called on if someone shows signs of suffering from mental health related

illness. Evidence has shown that early intervention with stress related illness can have a beneficial effect on improving recovery, much the same as traditional first aid. There are already over 20 employees trained, with a further 30 taking part in a second training course.

Wellbeing amongst our staff is an important issue that I shall continue to focus on in my Policy Lead role. I look forward to reporting on other measures that the service is putting in place as a result of the staff wellbeing survey.

Communications – Social Media Success

The Council's Communications Team has been focussing on increasing the Council's 'reach' on social media. Figures in the first quarter of 2018/19 show that this work has led to an increase in positive stories about the Council being published and an increase in followers and 'likes' across all of the social media channels that the Council has a presence on: LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

The Council remains the most followed on Instagram and regularly shares photographs from members of the public who have 'tagged' their photos of Argyll and Bute with the Council's hashtag #abplace2b. This is an effective tool to promote the area as a great place to live, learn, work and do business.

4.4 Customer and Support Services:

Universal Credit – Elected Members and Private Landlords Session

A range of training sessions are being held in advance of the introduction of Universal Credit Full Service to ensure that landlords, advisors and council staff are well prepared for the go live on 19th September 2018. I attended one of these sessions on 28th August.

The training explained how to apply for Universal Credit online and of the requirement to maintain an online journal to provide evidence of work seeking activity to maintain your entitlement. It also provided information on how payments are made, including direct payments to landlords and split payments which are special Scottish flexibilities, and how advances can be obtained to bridge the gap before the first payment is made and how these are subsequently recovered. I was impressed by the key role of the Work Coach in Job Centres who are key to helping people navigate through making their claim and then helping them to get into work.

Universal Credit became available to single people of working age in Argyll and Bute from 7th March 2016. The rollout of Universal Credit was then temporarily paused by the Government from 1st January 2018. Argyll and Bute is due to move to being a full service area on 19th September which means that any claimant of working age, whether single or part of a couple,

with or without children, making a new claim to benefits from this date will claim Universal Credit, replacing a raft of other benefits including:-

- Income based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Support
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit

Free School Meals and Clothing Grants

Earlier in 2018, the clothing grant budget for each pupil was increased from £50 per child to £100 per child. As at 4th September, 760 awards for 1,318 pupils were given. In the case of free school meals, 604 awards for 1,004 pupils were made.

ICT

The average time to fix IT faults for the month of July is 3.2 hours, well below the performance target of 5 hours.

The Service have recently been successful in recruiting two new IT Modern Apprentices (MAs) and they are due to take up post in early September. The two previous MAs are now undertaking Graduate Apprenticeships in IT and Cyber Security whilst working full time and it is hoped that the new recruits will be just as successful.

Local Tax Collections

Council Tax collections for 2018/19 as at end July 2018 are 38.85%, down 0.06% on the previous year at this time.

Collections for 2017/18 are now 96.18% and this is up by 0.26% on previous year at this time. Following the publication of the national collection statistics for 2017/18 at the end of June there has been some publicity about the level of Council Tax arrears which now exceeds £20m before write-offs for the 25 years back to 1993/4 when Council Tax was brought in. We budget to achieve 97.5% collection and for 2007/8 to 2011/12 we have collected in excess of 98.1% for each of these years.

The Strategic Management Team have indicated interest in investing resources in further initiatives that might improve collection provided these pay back, and options are currently being worked up for further consideration.

Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF)

The programme funding for 2018/19 is £438,720 – an increase of 4.4%. As at the end of July, we have spent £146,531 on applications received which was 96.3% of the profiled amount. There were four claims received but not yet processed at the time of writing. We 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.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) and benefit cap

The confirmed funding to date for DHPs for 2018/19 is £604,936 following Council approval for carried forward earmarking of previous underspend. The Strategic Management Team has agreed to support the same priority cases in 2018/19 as we have done throughout 2017/18. At the end of July we have spent or committed £607,617 which is slightly above the funds currently available. The final tranche of funding (the 20% holdback from 2017/18) was expected in August.

We have processed 1,094 applications for DHP and made 1,040 awards. There were a total of 17 applications outstanding or requiring further information at the end of July. Full year commitments have been made for all known under-occupancy cases.

Procurement, Commissioning and Creditors

For year to date to end of July 97.5% of creditor invoices have been paid within 30 days, which is well above the target of 95%.

The next Procurement and Commercial Improvement Programme (PCIP) assessment, which looks at the policies and procedures driving procurement performance and the results they deliver, is due to take place in November 2018. This is slightly earlier than anticipated and it will be challenging to complete all improvement actions in advance of this.

Customer Service Centre

The call abandon rate for July was 5.4%, which is a continued improvement from June's 5.75 and below the target of 6%. Average call times for July were on target at 3.50 minutes and the 'resolved at first point of contact' rate was 92%, against a target of 91%. The voice automated call routing success rate dropped below target (79%) for July to 76.2% and the reasons for this are currently being investigated.

Consultations

The Scottish Parliament's Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee is considering the Prescription (Scotland) Bill. This Bill aims to amend the law relating to the extinction of civil rights and obligations by the passage of time. The Committee recently completed its Stage 1 enquiry and the question of Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates (NDR) collection arose.

If the Bill is passed as currently drafted, the statutory obligation to pay Council Tax and NDR would prescribe at 20 years.

The Committee has written to all 32 local authorities seeking some additional information to justify why it should not be a shorter five year period, and we have provided this data to them. We would argue strongly for the continuation of the current prescription period of 20 years in line with other taxes.

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

- 5.1 Health and Social Care Partnership:** Recently Christina West, Chief Officer, and Caroline Whyte, Chief Financial Officer have left their positions within the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP). Christina oversaw the establishment of the Partnership and the bringing together of the widest range of services anywhere in Scotland, while Caroline faced the challenge of coordinating and reporting on the two very different financial systems that exist within the Council and the NHS. I would like to thank them both for their extensive contributions over the last few years and wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

Appropriate interim arrangements were put in place to ensure continued leadership and control over finances. Subsequently Joanna MacDonald has been appointed to be Chief Officer while recruitment for the Chief Financial Officer post is ongoing. I look forward to working with her, and to maintaining the positive relationships already in place with the Partnership's senior management team.

- 5.2 Policy Lead Activities:** I was at the Integration Joint Board (IJB) meeting on 1st August where approval was given for the Primary Care Improvement Plan. This has been revised to take into account the new GP contract agreed between the Scottish Government and the British Medical Association. Another significant part of the agenda was updates on stakeholder engagement processes for the Strategic Plan and the Transforming Together programme.

I have also been at meetings of the IJB Quality and Finance Board on 20th June, Clinical and Care Governance Committee on 21st June, and Audit Committee on 26th June.

I was in attendance at the Corporate Parenting Board on 17th August where there were a wide range of topics pertaining to our looked after, and looked after and accommodated young people. It was particularly pleasing to hear from a care experienced person about their plans to travel to Thailand with Project Trust to teach English and to also celebrate their exam results.

Nationally I have been at the COSLA Health and Social Care Board on 24th August, where agenda items included NHS Regional Planning, the National Workforce Plans for Health and Social Care, and the new national authority for Public Health. I have also participated in the IJB Chairs and Vice-Chairs network on 25th June.

On 31st August I was involved in discussions about the Autism Strategy with HSCP officers and representatives from Autism Network Scotland. As well as comments and reports about current services within Argyll and Bute, examples of practice and models used elsewhere in Scotland were highlighted. A short life working group will be established and meet monthly to ensure that progress is made around this.

5.3 Joint Inspection of Children's Services: This is underway with inspectors from four agencies: The Care Inspectorate, Healthcare Improvement Scotland, Education Scotland, and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Scotland.

The inspection focuses on five key questions:

1. How good is the partnership at recognising and responding when children and young people need protection?
2. How good is the partnership at helping children and young people who have experienced abuse and neglect stay safe, healthy and well and recover from their experiences?
3. How good is the partnership at maximising the wellbeing of children and young people who are looked after?
4. How good is the partnership at enabling care experienced young people to succeed in their transition to adulthood?
5. How good is collaborative leadership?

Self-evaluation and pre-inspection returns have been submitted, and surveys of staff, children, young people, parents and carers have been carried out.

Inspectors were on site for the week of 10th September. The first three days involved detailed file readings of files from Social Work, Health, Education, Police and the Scottish Children's Reporters Administration. This was followed by two days of participation events and engagement with children and young people.

They are due to return the week of 22nd October for focus groups with staff, elected members, the third sector, parents and carers. These will be based on the findings of the self-evaluation report and the file reading and as such details are not available yet.

An outcome of the inspection is anticipated in March 2019, and in the meantime further questions about the process can be directed to the Inspection Leads Patricia Renfrew (Consultant Nurse, Patricia.renfrew@nhs.net) and Morag Brown (Business Improvement Manager, Morag.brown@argyll-bute.gov.uk).

- 5.4 Children and Families:** A recent unannounced inspection by the Care Inspectorate of Shellach View, our Children's House in Oban resulted in a grade 5 (Very Good) being maintained across all four quality statements. All three of our houses are graded Very Good by the Care Inspectorate.

Service reviews and redesigns being overseen by the Children and Families Project Board include Early and Effective Intervention (EEI), Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Adoption and Fostering, the Care Assessment and Reviewing Service, Criminal Justice, and Core and Cluster.

- 5.5 Adult Services:** Following the moratorium on admissions being lifted at Ardnahein Care Home in Dunoon, robust monitoring is in place to ensure improvements are maintained.

Care at home capacity in Oban and Lorn particularly is still an issue with external providers unable to increase provision. One has also withdrawn from Luing, and the island is being temporarily covered by the internal service pending a long term solution being identified.

The Oban Community Care Team is due to be launched on 1st October. This will focus on supporting discharge and reablement with the aim of reducing delayed discharges from hospital and demand on care at home services. Work towards establishing Community Teams in Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands remains underway.

Lynn of Lorn Care Home in Benderloch, near Oban ceased providing 24 hour nursing care provision on 31st July. All residents were able to remain in the care home with nursing care being provided by the community nursing team.

Primary care redesign continues, with the GP Lead for the Mull single practice being advertised, and provision of dispensing within the planned amalgamation of Campbeltown Medical Practice and Kintyre Medical Group now agreed.

A steering group has been set up to look at the redesign of Learning Disability Services. Themes being explored include caring, enabling, living, working and learning opportunities, and the transition of young people to

adult services. This group will also revisit the strategy, outcomes, and service pathways for individuals with Autism.

5.6 People and Change: The new values and practices framework (CIRCLE) was approved by the IJB on 1st August. This is named due to the new shared values – Compassion, Integrity, Respect, Continuous-learning, Leadership and Excellence (CIRCLE). Pilot rollout workshops have taken place and we will be launching CIRCLE in September 2018. Embedding of our new Shared Values across Recruitment, Induction, Appraisal and Staff Recognition will be happening over the next four to six months.

A full Culture Values Assessment will be undertaken within the HSCP in Spring 2019 to help support further integration between health and social work/care staff.

The first HSCP Workforce Plan for 2018/19, focussed on Adult Services has now been approved by the IJB. Development continues to expand this by March 2019 to encompass all HSCP services and those of our third sector partners. This will then also align and inform the HSCPs refreshed three-year Strategic plan for 2019 to 2022.

iMatter is a continuous improvement tool designed with staff in NHS Scotland to help individuals, teams and Boards understand and improve staff experience. The 2018 survey has been completed and our HSCP participation rate fell from 61% to 50%. Work is now progressing to improve the number of iMatter team action plans developed by end-September. This will help drive continuous improvement on people issues across the organisation. The more actions are implemented, the greater chance we have of lifting iMatter participation rates again in 2019.

The structure of the Strategic Leadership Team has been revised and agreed by the IJB. This now also includes the Head of People and Change, retains two Heads of Adult Services and confirms the Chief Financial Officer as being at Head of Service level.

The Heads of Adult Services will operate within a matrix management structure to improve co-operation and communication across geographical areas, and which will also address a previous lack of clearly defined professional leadership for social work.

New job descriptions are being prepared for the Heads of Adult Services to take into account revised responsibilities and once completed recruitment can commence to the one currently vacant Head of Adult Service post.

A review has been initiated of the Locality Manager/Local Area Manager 'middle management' structures within Adult Services to improve how both strategic and operational decision making occurs.

- 5.7 Finance:** At the start of the financial year the IJB approved a Quality and Finance Plan that included a budget gap of £1.6m for 2018-19 for the HSCP.

Due to a number of factors, including a lack of agreement as to the value of the service level agreement with Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board, continued reliance on locum and agency staff, and increased service demand, the forecast end of year outturn, as reported to the IJB and the Council Policy and Resources Committee in August, had increased to £4.4m as of 30th June.

A verbal update was provided to the IJB and the Council Policy and Resources Committee stating that this was expected to have fallen to £4m as of the end of July, and the Financial Recovery Plan remains in place to bring the HSCP towards financial balance for 2018-19.

Significant budget gaps of between £6m and £8m are forecast for each of the coming three years, resulting in an estimated budget gap from 2019-20 to 2021-22 of between £19m and £24m. A timetable for the HSCP to conduct consultation and engagement on service changes, which will be progressed alongside the refresh of the Strategic Plan, was approved by the IJB in August.

- 5.8 Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry:** On 13th September the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry announced that a further 17 institutions were part of ongoing investigations. This includes two facilities which were/are local authority-run within the Argyll and Bute geographical area - Cardross Park Assessment Centre and Dunclutha Children's Home. Two other facilities in the area, which were operated by other providers, are also included - Lagarie House Children's Home in Rhu and St Andrew's School in Shandon. Council and Health and Social Care Partnership Officers will be providing full co-operation with the inquiry going forward.

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 maintain regular contact and meet with a range of officers across the policy briefs and, as always, their continued assistance and support is much appreciated.

6.2 Marine Works and Progress Update:

Port Askaig

A draft report has now been received. A meeting with the Port Askaig User Group will take place in early October to discuss. It will also feature in discussions at the regular meeting between the council, Transport Scotland, CMAL and Calmac (date yet to be set). Currently, three options have been identified.

Craignure

Document currently at 'draft initial appraisal' stage. Further consultation meetings with stake-holders to take place. Work is progressing well - currently on programme. The final report is expected to be complete by mid-December this year.

Iona/Fionnphort

Ground investigation works are now complete. A consultation meeting with the local communities will be held towards the end of this calendar year. Draft feasibility study to be complete by March 2019. It seems likely that the community have aspirations beyond the basic brief to provide an overnight berth for the ferry – this will be discussed as part of the consultation meetings.

Tayinloan/Gigha

No further progress – although, if resources are available, design work could be progressed in-house to move this project along to the next stage.

Rothesay

Off-site fabrication ongoing with start on site planned for end of September /early October this year – to be complete around the calendar year end. Next stage - AECOM will progress design for grouting thereafter, with contract award expected around April next year.

6.3 Waste Strategy: The Waste Strategy report was approved by EDI committee on Thursday 6th September. It gives elected members details on how waste disposal is currently managed across the council area under three distinct models:

- Island Model- ABC operating Landfill sites on Islay and Mull,
- PPP Area- Mainland Argyll including Bute but excluding Helensburgh and Lomond, covered by PPP 25yr contract with Renewi until 2026,
- Helensburgh and Lomond- All Waste taken out with the Council area for processing or disposal.

The report then lays out the four structural challenges that will have an effect on each model:

- The Biodegradable Municipal Waste (BMW) Ban, effectively a ban on Landfill - January 2021,
- The end of the Waste PPP (with Renewi) contract ending in 2026,
- The introduction of the Deposit Return Scheme for single use plastics,

- The potential requirement for Food Waste collection to be implemented in Oban as a result of its re-classification from rural to urban area.

The key purpose of the Waste strategy is to provide solutions to these structural issues to ensure that a compliant value for money solutions are implemented. This report provides high level detail on the two preferred technical solutions that will be evaluated as part of an options appraisal process.

Following endorsement of the September report, the next report to EDI in December will contain the draft Waste Strategy with options appraisal for review and sign off prior to going out for public consultation.

6.4 Northern Roads Collaboration Forum: The second formal meeting of the partnership authorities in the Northern Roads Collaboration was hosted by Argyll and Bute Council, the chair organisation, on 31st August in Kilmory. The member authorities (ourselves, Highland, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Moray, Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City and Angus) are working on a number of projects across a range of roads and marine-related activities with a view to enhancing joint working, sharing of documents and resources, and overall delivering good practice across these areas in a cost-effective way.

6.5 Roads and Amenity Services Customer Care Project: The customer care project has so far made improvements to a range of processes and procedures under categories which generate high volumes of enquiries. These include road faults, missed bins, assisted collections, bin collection enquiries, winter maintenance, bin ordering, commercial waste and special lifts.

An exciting development on the horizon is the integration of the road asset management system with the customer service system which will allow customers to get automatically generated updates as their enquiry goes through the process of logging, assessment and where necessary repair.

Lastly, the recruitment process for two new customer liaison posts to support this project and handle correspondence more generally is underway, with the new business support team which sits as part of the service redesign which is taking shape.

6.6 Capital Programme: The Roads Reconstruction Programme has been structured in accordance with the Roads Asset Management and Maintenance Strategy. The focus has been to maximise surface treatment through a delivery of a mix of carriageway resurfacing, patching/surface dressing and in-situ road surface recycling; designed to seal the road to stop the ingress of water, improve ride quality. This will also reduce the amount of reactive repairs required.

Surface dressing schemes are selected on the basis that either the skid resistance of the road surface is poor, or the road surface requires sealing *before* it fails. There is also a weighting/ranking applied regarding routes classification and hierarchy for the purposes of scheme selection.

As in previous years, the roads reconstruction programme is being delivered by a mixed economy model with the council's in-house team delivering carriageway reconstruction and patching works. The surface dressing element of the programme and specialist treatments are delivered by an external contractor.

Works with an approximate value of £5.1m or 60% of the Capital Budget have been completed as of the end of Aug 2018 – almost £3m of surface dressing works are complete and this coupled with £2m of resurfacing works has delivered improvements to around 81-plus kilometres of Argyll and Bute's Roads network.

Surfacing and re-tread works are programmed to continue and with Scottish Timber Transport Scheme Grant contributions bolstering our Capital Budget by £1.466m some routes affected by timber traffic will be further improved. This is really good news with our already increased capital programme being further enhanced through our collaborative work with the Strategic Timber Transport Group.

Footways are also being improved through resurfacing and specialist treatment schemes with works programmed to be completed by November 2018.

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

7.1 Communities:

Community Development and Community Planning: Last month I was invited to speak at a COSLA run event on Participatory Budgeting and was able to tell the audience of our experience here in Argyll and Bute. This sharing of experiences and knowledge is hugely important in mapping the way forward.

A total of 61 community groups across Argyll and Bute were awarded Supporting Communities Fund Grants as a result of the Participatory Budgeting (PB) pilot in May 2018. Community Development Officers (CDOs) have been assisting unsuccessful projects to obtain funding from elsewhere. In MAKI, the CDO is providing a steer on a live PB Voting event run by Mid Argyll Health and Wellbeing Network to distribute grants. Across Argyll & Bute, CDOs are working with community partners on projects such as the Cowal Heritage Trail and groups such as Dunbeg Action Group.

Various groups are being supported in terms of governance, funding and training needs.

The August meetings of the Area Community Planning Groups were well attended and featured matters of local importance alongside various community groups presenting successes and challenges. The Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan is currently out to consultation; two of the Area Community Planning Groups will be holding focus groups to prepare a detailed response on behalf of their local area.

The CPP Management Committee will next be meeting in September for their development day, to examine the results of a self-evaluation exercise with the Improvement Service. The Full Partnership meeting originally scheduled for December 2018 will now be taking place in March 2019 to reflect on the past year and look ahead to the next.

7.2 Housing:

Housing Support: 62 households left housing support in quarter 1 - 50 were planned which is **81%**. The target of 80% has been achieved. Universal Credit Full Service will be coming to Argyll in September 2018. It is anticipated that this will result in an increased demand for housing support services.

Homelessness: (Unless stated the comparisons are based on the same period in the previous year)

88 homeless applications were recorded during the period from 1st April to 30th June 2018, this is a reduction from 148 applications (41% down) in the same period in the previous year

Area	Trend	Change in: Number	Change in: (%)
Bute and Cowal	Down	13	-37%
Helensburgh & Lomond	Down	17	-41%
Mid Argyll, Kintyre & Islay	Down	21	-48%
Oban, Lorn & the Isles	Down	9	-33%

The main reasons for homelessness remain consistent with previous years with Dispute with Household – non-violent and violent, and asked to leave recorded as 20% each.

During Quarter 1 of 2017/18 there were 14 households (10%) recorded as homeless due to 'Termination of tenancy/mortgage due to rent arrears /

default in payments'. This has reduced to 7 households and (8%) in the same quarter of 2018/19.

Energy Efficiency: Local Heat and Energy bid for a project worker on the private rented sector was successful and will enable analysis and an Action Plan to be prepared for that sector.

HEEPSABS continues with good uptake and the Housing Services continues to maximise the uptake of energy efficiency grant funding in Argyll and Bute.

Housing and Economic Development Seminar: I was delighted to welcome participants to a successful and productive seminar held at SAMS in Dunbeg on 21st August with over 60 delegates discussing how housing can contribute to economic growth in Argyll and Bute. Delegates included members of the Business Community, Housing Associations, Community Groups and HIE. The Wee House Company and the Construction Scotland Innovation Centre amongst others gave presentations on innovative solutions to delivering suitable housing to assist economic growth. Feedback will assist housing to play a key role in the up and coming Rural Growth Deal for Argyll and Bute.

Rapid Rehousing: New to the agenda is the Scottish Government's requirement for a root and branch review of homeless services under the Rapid Rehousing Guidance and it was good to attend a recent event chaired by the Minister for Housing about this.

A Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019-2024 is due to be submitted to the Scottish Government by 15th December 2018 and work has started with partner organisations to meet this deadline.

- 7.3 Islands:** The Argyll Islands Strategic Group, which I Chair, met on Tuesday 28th August. Members focused their conversation on a report outlining proposed roles for five recently appointed Scottish Government Island Liaison Directors, two of whom attended and were introduced to the meeting. The detail of the role is not yet entirely defined, and much of it will develop as the 18 month pilot project progresses.

The group had a wide ranging discussion around the implications for islands of the forthcoming changes in respect of disposal of waste, in particular the increase in costs both financial and environmental that will have to be borne, endorsing the approach being taken through the Waste Strategy review to identify and cost potential solutions.

The group also gave consideration and feedback to the Rural, Economy and Connectivity Committee- Draft Budget 2019-2010-Clyde and

Hebridean Ferry Services-Call for Views in order that the council can submit these views to the Holyrood Committee.

- 7.4 Culture, Heritage and the Arts (CHArts):** Membership of CHArts continues to grow and as of 31st August 2018 there were 272 individuals and 52 organisations signed up. CHArts is becoming an incorporated organisation in a first step towards becoming a SCIO. A report will be forthcoming to full council later this year for an elected member to be nominated to the SCIO.

Sole traders and organisations were represented at a 'Wild About Argyll' event held at the Briggait in Glasgow to coincide with the Scottish World Piping Championships on the weekend of 18/19 August 2018. The event was organised by Argyll and the Isles Tourism Co-operative who CHArts continues to work closely with. CHArts invited eleven makers, artists and producers to showcase their work, with a catalogue created and bound by one of the makers. Elected members are encouraged to visit <https://www.chartsargyllandisles.org/> for up to the minute information.

- 7.5 Gaelic:** We have now set the date for the 2nd Gaelic Gathering which will be 2nd March 2019. The theme of the Gathering hasn't yet been finalised but it will aim to attract as many people as possible from Argyll and Bute and beyond with an interest in the future of Gaelic. This is a big event for Argyll and Bute and I'm looking forward to the challenge of organising it along with Council officers.

In a few weeks' time the Royal National Mod will be held in Dunoon, running from the 12th – 20th October. I have been honoured to have been invited to open the Mod and I'm looking forward to the occasion in the completely refurbished Queens Hall on 12th October.

8. POLICY LEAD FOR EDUCATION – Councillor Yvonne McNeilly

- 8.1 Education Scotland follow-up:** Strong leadership, customised support for schools and staff committed to improvement were all recognised in Education Scotland's progress report published in July.

HM Inspectors spoke to council staff across different areas of the education service from its leadership to central support teams and head teachers, teaching staff and young people, as well as the Leader of the Council and the Policy Lead for Education.

Their summary findings recognise that:

- The council's vision and strategy, [Our Children, Their Future](#), is now driving clearly the Education Service's improvement planning. This vision sets out the goal that together education staff will realise ambition, excellence and equality for all.
- Under the strong leadership of the Chief Education Officer, staff have sustained and strengthened their efforts to embed improvements at all levels of the education community.
- A structured approach to school improvement visits, and a sound evaluative process for identifying risk, mean the council can provide customised support to individual schools and groups of schools.
- Staff at all levels have continued to increase their skills and confidence in the use of data analysis to achieve and sustain improved outcomes for children and young people.

The findings also touch on steps taken to support on-going improvement:

- A programme of performance data meetings and information sessions will increase scrutiny by elected members of schools and the overall education service.
- The two recently appointed Heads of Service have a strong capacity to enhance educational leadership across the authority. These posts bring increased support for schools and education staff.

Inspectors will visit again later this year, this time to focus on how well we are improving the quality of young people's attainment. Everyone involved is looking forward to working positively once again with Education Scotland given our shared focus on the best possible support and outcomes for our young people. Education is one of the council's top priorities and, as Policy Lead, I am doing all that I can to ensure that the service is supported in driving forward improvement and delivering the success we all want to see for our young people.

8.2 Positive Destinations: A report published by Skills Development Scotland early in September highlights that the number of young people in Argyll and Bute who are in employment, education or training currently stands at 94.2% - 2.4% higher than the national average - putting Argyll and Bute in the top 8 of Scotland's 32 local authorities.

This shows the great efforts that have been made to help our young people make positive progress and access appropriate pathways into work.

Together with our partners at Skills Development Scotland and Job Centre, we have been working hard to promote enterprise and entrepreneurship, and to help our young people raise their ambitions so that they can develop and succeed.

- 8.3 Attainment and Achievement:** SQA results for Argyll and Bute Council continue to demonstrate improvement with outcomes for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher exceeding the national average. 100% of Nat 3 and 4 students passed, and more Higher and Advanced Higher pupils achieved pass marks than last year.

These latest figures are clear evidence that attainment in Argyll and Bute is on the rise. Everyone involved – our pupils and our teaching staff – can be very proud of their efforts and their success.

- 8.4 Annual Plan/PEF:** The Annual Education Plan has been approved by Committee and has been submitted to the Scottish Government. The plan has been prepared in line with the requirements of the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000 and brings together a range of information about the work of the Education Service for parents, pupils, staff, carers and communities.

It contains examples of how PEF funding is being used by our education establishments to close the poverty related attainment gap. For example Rockfield Primary School employed a Youth Engagement Worker to develop confidence and leadership skills with children. The Youth Engagement Worker enjoyed working within education so much that he is currently undertaking the PGCE for Primary Education course to become a teacher.

- 8.5 Northern Alliance Action Plan:** The Northern Alliance Action plan has been published. Anne Paterson is taking up the lead for the Early Years Workstream while Kathleen Johnston has been seconded as the Early Years PT.

At the time of writing myself and the Education Service management team are preparing to attend the Northern Alliance Summit in Inverness on 14th September.

The Northern Alliance has now appointed a new Regional Improvement Lead – Andrew Griffiths, formerly Head of Education at Aberdeenshire Council. At the time of writing he was due to take up post and, along with the Education Service senior management, I am looking forward to working with Andrew through our participation in the alliance.

- 8.6 Ministerial Visits:** The Service were delighted to welcome two Scottish Government ministers to Argyll and Bute facilities recently.

John Swinney, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, undertook a visit to Tiree High School where he toured the whole campus, met with staff and engaged in a question and answer session with secondary pupils.

In her visit to Stramash Oban, the Minister for Children and Young People, Maree Todd, met a range of childcare representatives and parents and discussed how Stramash provided to a high quality, outdoors care and learning experience for children. During her visit she said: “It’s been an absolute pleasure to visit Stramash today and to see the children so full of fun and obviously enjoying the outdoors.

8.7 Support with school uniforms: One of a range of ways in which the council is delivering locally on national priorities, eligible families in Argyll and Bute receive £100 towards the cost of school uniform per child. Dunoon Grammar School operates a Uniform Recycling scheme to further support families to provide uniforms for young people. A wide selection of pre-owned school wear items, in excellent condition are available to purchase for a small donation.

8.7 Teacher Training in Argyll and Bute: The council has been working in partnership with the Universities of Dundee and Highlands and Islands to agree a training programme which will allow people to train as secondary school teachers here in Argyll and Bute. The programme was recently approved by the General Teaching Council of Scotland and will see student teachers based in local schools over an 18-month period.

Subjects currently on offer are chemistry, computing, home economics, maths and physics – all areas experiencing shortages in teaching staff across Scotland.

When students have successfully completed their course they will be awarded a Post Graduate Diploma in Education which allows them to immediately apply for teaching posts.

The first intake of students are due to start in December. This is a welcome initiative which has the double outcome of providing the best for our young people and retaining a high calibre of staff. It is another example of ‘growing our own’ highly qualified staff as well as complementing our existing primary teacher training scheme.

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

9.1 Planning (Scotland) Bill: The key Stage 2 amendments to the Planning (Scotland) Bill were due to be considered by the COSLA Environment and Economy Board on 14th September. Our Planning Service has provided comprehensive comments on these key amendments - there are some

areas where they are in agreement with the COSLA position but others where they feel some further adjustment is required.

There are several issues where key amendments are proposed and which will have a significant bearing on Argyll and Bute, including modification of the meaning of development to include agriculture and forestry, which could result in an increase in applications in our authority area; change of use aspects in relation to use of a house for short term holiday lets (Argyll and Bute has the highest percentage of second homes of all Scottish councils); the meaning of 'material consideration'; and the creation of a Chief Planning Officer.

- 9.2 New Planning Enforcement and Monitoring Charter 2018:** In June this year, PPSL approved an updated Argyll and Bute Enforcement and Monitoring Charter. Our charter outlines a proportionate and pragmatic approach to planning enforcement in order to ensure that our environment and our economy can co-exist and complement each other. Effective regulation and enforcement is a key component in ensuring that all developers operate on an equal footing and that the aspirations of the council's development strategy are achieved.

Enforcement charters are required to be reviewed every two years – given that enforcement is one of the most complex elements of the planning system, this is essential to ensure that we maintain fair and reasonable procedures alongside public confidence in the planning process. The charter is an important part of keeping people informed and up to date about what they can expect on an aspect of council business in which there is significant public interest.

- 9.3 Good planning practice highlighted:** The Planning Service has presented its 2017/18 Planning Performance Framework (PPF) report to the Scottish Government for scoring, taking the opportunity to highlight several areas of good practice that are commonplace within Argyll and Bute.

Through initiatives like the pre-application advice service, and introducing simplified planning zones, the service has a significant part to play in protecting Argyll and Bute's outstanding natural and built environment – which includes 32 conservation areas. It must balance this with finding ways of opening up development opportunities for new homes and businesses. The Argyll and Bute approach is consistently successful with 97.6% of all applications approved during the period covered by this PPF report.

Our planning teams take an open-for-business approach – actively looking for solutions and ways to overcome barriers, mindful of the impact that their work has on achieving our corporate objectives and ambitions for the area. The report highlights how we do this – how we support economic growth,

help create jobs, promote tourism and ultimately boosting population growth, through a highly effective planning service with a positive, can-do approach.

- 9.4 Fresh air in Argyll and Bute:** Another example of the council supporting national objectives was highlighted to PPSL in August with a report on air quality in the area. We have a duty under the Environment Act 1995 to assess local air quality and support the Government's overall aims of improving health and wellbeing.

The Cleaner Air for Scotland Strategy has national objectives in place for eight major air pollutants which can be harmful both to human health and the environment. Within Argyll and Bute, levels of air pollutant levels are lower than annual targets or are falling in most areas. This is good news for Argyll and Bute and we are working hard to ensure that it stays that way.

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**

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