

29th November 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 the council at its meeting on 27th September; this report covers the period from that date until 15th November.

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 September, October and November. I have held regular meetings and discussions with a range of officers across the policy briefs.

- 3.2 **Strategic Finance:** Next year's budget is the principal focus for strategic finance. Mid-range forecasts indicate a shortfall of £7.8m in 2019/20, and while the council has already taken steps to address this, and building in assumptions around council tax/fees and charges increases which will be subject to council approval in February, there remains a need to find further savings of £3.7m in 2019/20.

It is notable that there are still outstanding pay negotiations for teacher and other local government workers that may have a substantial impact on our finances if they are not fully funded by the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government's budget is set for 12th December and with a near £1billion extra being made available to Scotland after the UK Government's autumn statement, it is hoped that local government services will be valued and benefit accordingly.

3.3 Capital Regeneration:

Helensburgh Waterfront Development: At the date of writing, the PPSL are due to consider on November 19th the planning application for this flagship Argyll and Bute project. Following the outcome of the planning application decision, an update will come to the Area Committee. I also recently met with the skateboarders association about their aspirations for an enhanced long term facility at the waterfront.

Dunoon Queen's Hall: This project has revitalised the Queen's Hall, giving people exciting gathering places both inside and outside the building; provided a purpose built fitness and training suite; provided a new home for the public library; co-located the offices of Skills Development Scotland; provided a completely refurbished main auditorium including retractable seating, new lighting and audio visual facilities; provided a children's soft play area for children from early years up to age ten; provided a new cafeteria and catering facilities capable of servicing the various uses envisaged for the building; provided a new road layout, public realm with paving, and soft landscaping to revitalise and enhance access to Dunoon town centre; and delivered a major building refurbishment as opposed to new build project; and enhanced the public realm around the area of Dunoon's War Memorial.

The project achieved practical completion on 4th July 2018 and is now six months through the 12 months defects rectification period. It has an approved project budget of £12m and the anticipated final account is £12.51m, which is a projected overspend of £510,000 against budget. A report is being prepared for the Policy and Resources committee identifying the key cost variances.

Rothesay Pavilion: This is a complex project and as previously reported the main contractor CBC has been on site since 29th November 2017 with a completion date of 31st July 2019. At the time of writing the percentage of programme passed on the original contract duration of 87 weeks is 49% (43 weeks). There are cost pressures to keep contract provisional sums below estimated values, but these are being monitored and actively managed to minimise the overall risk to the council. The project's anticipated final cost remains within the approved budget. A detailed progress report is being prepared for the Bute and Cowal Area Committee.

A strong partnership approach has been forged between the Pavilion's Project Manager, Jonathan Miles and the Charity's Artistic Director (AD)/Chief Executive Officer (CEO) role shared by Jackie Shearer and Julie L Tait, who took up the post on 3rd September 2018. This has not only assisted to ensure that the HLF Heritage activity plans are progressed but that substantive progress has been made towards securing the capital fundraising that the charity agreed to contribute. Of the £400,000 target, the charity have been successful in securing £327,000 of this target.

- 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.

As part of a council deputation, I along with the Leader and other members met the Cabinet Secretary, Michael Matheson to press the case for a long term solution for the A83 Rest and Be Thankful. The Leader, Cllr Douglas and I also met to review the final Rural Growth Deal paper for submission to both UK and Scottish governments.

4. POLICY LEAD FOR CORPORATE SERVICES – Councillor Rory Colville

- 4.1 Introduction:** I continue to meet with the Executive Director of Customer Services and Heads of Service every six weeks to discuss matters relating to my Policy Lead remit.
- 4.2 Kintyre Food Bank:** Donations for food banks across Argyll and Bute continue to be collected and distributed from Kilmory/Manse Brae, Lochgilphead. Pictured below is the latest delivery of supplies to Kintyre Food Bank.



Plans are currently being put in place to encourage an increase in donations in the run up to Christmas, at what can be a difficult time for many families. More details on this will follow in due course.

If you have any spare tins, cereal, pasta, rice etc or essential non-food items such as toiletries, we would be very grateful to receive your donations at the collection point in Kilmory reception.

4.3 Improvement and HR:

Learning Awards: The annual Learning Awards ceremony for employees who have achieved a professional, academic or vocational qualification linked to their role was held on Thursday 25th October 2018.

The ceremony was held in the Council Chambers, Kilmory and recognises employees who have gained a qualification supported by the council. The 68 employees receiving awards have shown great commitment and dedication to gain these qualifications. The council is proud to have such a fantastic workforce that is trained, qualified and experienced. These employees represent the best of that and are playing a huge part in helping the council deliver quality services for the people of Argyll and Bute. There were a wide range of qualifications represented – but what's clear across the board is that employees have the skills, abilities and confidence the council needs, and that our residents need.

4.4 Customer and Support Services:

Customer Outreach Programme Progress 2018: In order to increase customer engagement and reduce avoidable contacts, a project was approved by the Transformation Board to create digital outreach services using the media of email and SMS. The council holds the telephone and email contact details of many thousands of customers and in compliance with GDPR an exercise was carried out to ask their permission to use their details to contact them on specific topics as follows:-

To be informed of...

- Service disruptions
- Significant changes to services
- Council related events in their area

To be invited to take part in...

- Customer satisfaction surveys
- Consultations

Since issuing emails to customers inviting their response to the exercise, we have had a great response and now have almost 6,000 people signed up to get automatic notifications from the council on some or all of the

above. This enables us to provide proactive communications to customers on the subjects they want to hear about and that matter to them.

Local Tax Collections: Council Tax collections for 2018/19 as at end September 2018 are 57.33%, down 0.24% on the previous year at this time. The majority of this (0.18%) is due to slower collections from our Sheriff Officers. Collections via attachment of benefit orders is also down, and Water Direct monies are now starting to come in slowly, following some initial issues which have now been resolved.

Collections for 2017/18 are now 96.32% and this is up by 0.20% on the previous year at this time.

Scottish Welfare Fund: The programme funding for 2018/19 is £438,720 – an increase of 4.4%. As at the end of September, we had spent £205,578 on applications received which was 90% of the profiled amount. There were 17 claims received but not yet processed. 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. The September spend was unexpectedly low with half the volume of crisis grant applications as in August. This may have been due to individuals receiving advances under the new Universal Credit Full Service which went live on 19th September 2018.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) and Benefits Cap: The final tranche of funding (the 20% holdback from 2017/18) was received in September 2018. The confirmed funding for 2018/19 is now £642,220. 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 September we have spent or committed £608,776 and processed 1226 applications for DHP and made 1084 awards. There were a total of 19 applications outstanding or requiring further information at the end of September. Full year commitments have been made for all known under-occupancy cases.

Benefits processing: We have taken on average 5.59 days to process all benefits changes, which is within our performance target of 6 days. In contrast, for new claims processing we took an average of 21.54 days for the year to date at end September, which is slightly short of our 21 day target. This is improving and have been on target during the last 3 months. Our year to date accuracy statistics have remained excellent at 97.5% which is well above our target of 94%.

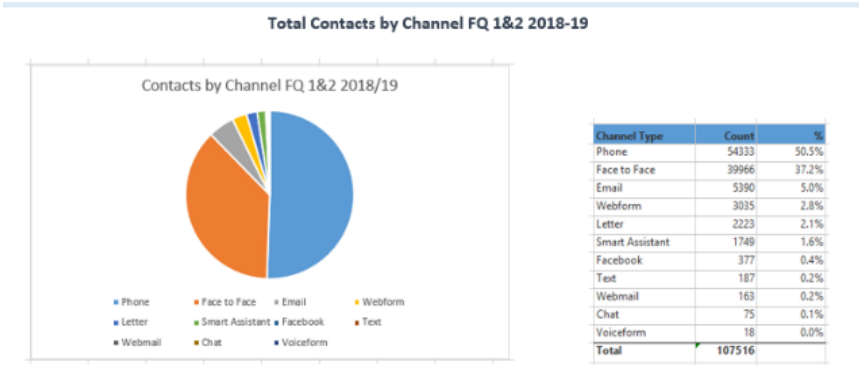
Procurement, Commissioning and Creditors: For the year to date to end of September we have paid 97.27% of creditors invoices within 30 days which is well above our target of 95.0%.

Although our percentage of SMEs winning contracts for the quarter was below our 75% target at 67.1%, some 73.1% of the total business by value was won by local businesses which is excellent.

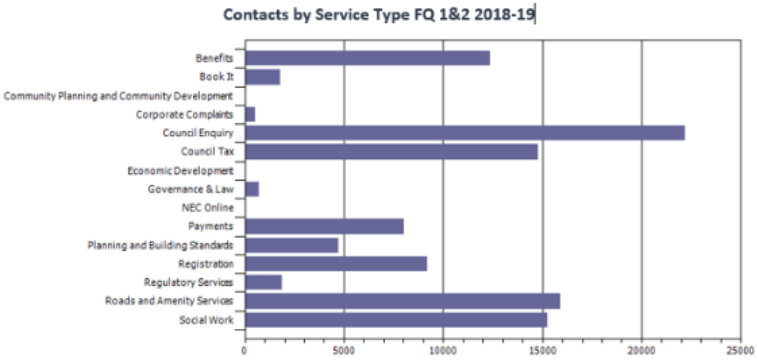
Customer Service Centre: The call abandon rate as at September was 4.4%, which is a continued improvement and below the target of 6%. Average call times for the quarter are 3.53 minutes, which is just fractionally above the target of 3.50 minutes. This is due to Water Direct calls which are new and taking longer to deal with. The 'resolved at first point of contact' rate was 92.5% for the quarter against a target of 91%. The voice automated call routing success rate for quarter is now back above target at 79.2% following some adjustments.

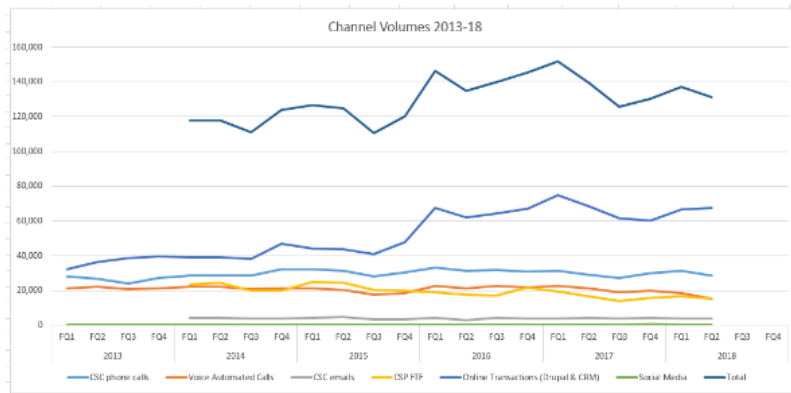
We went live with the updated call processing software at the end of August without any hitches to the service. The new call screening software for social work staff is working well and allowed us to direct over 200 calls directly to the designated officer – this is a primary cause of the reduced call abandon rate.

Detailed in the graphs below is a summary of the type and level of contacts we have had from customers during period April to September 2018, as well as some trend analysis. They illustrate that telephone and face-to-face are the two most common methods of contacting the Council and that Council enquiries, Roads and Amenity Services, and Social Work make up the top three service areas customers are most likely to contact us about.



Types of contact





Trends

Registration: We have just received the final results of the external examination of our 2017 registrations. The accuracy rate achieved is 98.06%, just below our 98.2% target. Of the 55 minor errors, we had already picked up and corrected 24 of them but these still count as errors. We now know not to finalise the FER record until after we have done our internal checking and this will ensure that these don't count in future.

ICT: The average time to fix IT faults for the month of September was 2.4 hours, well below our target of 5 hours.

We have been approached by Boston Networks about the possibility of installing Internet of Things gateways on council buildings and are exploring this with them. They have recently been awarded a contract from Scottish Enterprise to roll out 500 gateways across Scotland and are keen to work with us as we are a rural authority. We are already using sensors for Technology Enables Care and there are many other potential applications. Such gateways would enable us to carry out proof of concepts for very modest cost levels so this is a very exciting opportunity.

Non Domestic Rates Consultations: A response was recently prepared and submitted to an informal consultation on the proposal to produce standardised bills. We felt that the proposed format was unclear and are hoping that it will be amended. There will be costs associated with implementing these changes but our supplier is unable to estimate these until the format is finalised.

Universal Credit Full Service (UCFS): The launch of UCFS took place as planned on 19 September for our area. A large number of awareness training sessions have been delivered to our registered social landlords, advice agencies, our own welfare rights and benefits staff, and elected Member. Attendance on the whole was good and the sessions were well received, however a further session was arranged for private sector landlords at end October as their initial training date was poorly attended.

As at end September there were 48 new UC cases in our area, but we had not received any Housing Benefit stop notifications.

Scottish Social Security Agency: The Social Security Policy Division has been in touch to engage with us on Funeral Expense Assistance and we have provided them with contacts for housing benefit research and Registration as our registrars have much experience in engaging with those recently bereaved. This initial engagement was planned to take place in October, with further planning sessions due to take place in December with members of the public, which Community Planning will assist with. In addition, the new Scottish Social Security local delivery lead has agreed to attend the Welfare Reform Working Group scheduled for 6 December 2018.

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

5.1 Policy Lead Activities: Since writing my last report I have been at meetings of the Argyll and Bute Integration Joint Board (IJB) on 26th September, along with the IJB Audit Committee on 11th September, Quality and Finance Board on 18th September and 24th October, Strategic Planning Group on 25th October and Clinical and Care Governance Committee on 29th October.

The COSLA Health and Social Care Board met on 19th October with the new Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport, Jeanne Freeman addressing the board and answering questions. Themes covered by her included finance, shifting the balance of care to the community and integrated working. Other agenda items included the Programme for Government 2018-19 and the Children and Young People's Mental Health Task Force. The meeting concluded with a presentation by ENABLE Scotland encouraging members to 'Be The Change' in our communities by tackling bullying and discrimination of people who have a learning disability.

Following this I also attended the ENABLE Scotland Conference in Glasgow on 9th November, including workshops on joint working with Glasgow Caledonian University to train the learning disability workforce for the future, and a partnership with MacMillan to improve the accessibility of all aspects of healthcare to people with learning disabilities.

Further meetings of the IJB Chair's and Vice Chair's Executive and Network have taken place on 20th September and 26th October. These have involved senior officials within the Scottish Government and have focussed on finance and the use of directions by Integration Joint Boards.

As part of the Joint Inspection of Children's Services I attended a focus group for members of the Corporate Parenting Board on 24th October. This

included officers from across the service, and was one of dozens of such focus groups. These in turn were but one way the inspectors were looking at how we are delivering services and the impact these have on vulnerable children. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has worked hard to prepare for all aspects of the inspection.

The process of improving communication between members and officers continues and there was the initial meeting of the Senior Members-Officers Group on 31st October. There was also another Joint Meeting between Argyll and Bute Council, NHS Highland, and the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) on 6th November with a progress update on the Integration Scheme Review part of the agenda.

- 5.2 Children and Families:** A Foster Carer Development Day was held on 29th September which was well attended. Amongst the activities undertaken that day was a Care Inspectorate focus group with our carers and a presentation by the Fostering Network.

The Joint Inspection of Children's Services continued on the week beginning 22nd October. This was the second on-site week of the inspection team and involved the completion of 55 focus groups. During the course of the week individual interviews were also undertaken with the Chief Officers from across the children's partnership.

An unannounced inspection of the quality of care and support, and management and leadership in the Helensburgh Children's House took place on 14th September, resulting in the maintenance of the very good grades for these areas.

The Children's Programme Board are leading the delivery of the Children and Families element of the HSCP Quality and Finance Plan. The emphasis remains on service improvement and the use of all the available resources to best effect. Central to this is early intervention and prevention. The Programme Board are currently overseeing a number of discreet but related service reviews encompassing "Core and Cluster", Early and Effective Intervention (EEI), Care Assessment and Reviewing Service (CARO), Adoption and Fostering Services, Emergency Social Work Service (ESWS), Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Criminal, Youth and Community Justice. Further service reviews are planned culminating in the review of the Children and Families staffing and management structure in the New Year.

- 5.3 Adult Services:** A short life working group has been established to consider the demand and capacity issues within homecare. While linked to a national project, it is anticipated that this will support equity of services across Argyll and Bute.

Eadar Glinn care home has ongoing staff vacancies with a recruitment drive under way. This is impacting on discharges to care homes in the locality, although the Lynn of Lorn care home is now accepting admissions again under their new criteria.

Agency nurse use remains high within the Lorn and Islands Hospital with a review of the situation in progress. Meanwhile the hospital laboratory recently received a very positive report following a Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) Inspection.

Recruitment to the Clinical Lead post on Mull resulted in no suitable applicants and it is therefore being re-advertised. Filling of a vacant Local Area Manager post on Islay is on hold pending the result of the review of Locality Manager/Local Area Manager structures. Permanent recruitment to the one currently vacant Head of Adult Services post remains ongoing. Events were held to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Tigh a Rudha care home on Tìree in November and the 25th anniversary of Campbeltown Hospital on 31st October.

Following the success of the outreach dialysis unit in Campbeltown it is now planned to provide a new outreach dialysis unit in the Victoria Hospital on Bute. Considerable work will be required within the hospital to adapt existing facilities while ensuring that current services are maintained. Plans for recruitment for a specialist nurse and training for existing staff have begun.

Cornerstone are advancing plans for a new development in Garelochhead for people with disabilities and other support needs. The Waterfront service will have two separate service delivery models with five individual tenancies and five placements in a shared tenancy/HMO. These represent an opportunity to consolidate a number of placements in the area, release resources from external placements and mitigate against some of our younger adults having to leave Argyll and Bute in the future.

Under the overarching Learning Disability and Autism Steering Group a number of Short Life Working Groups (SLWGs) are continuing to meet. Developments include:

- Learning Disability Strategy which has been shared internally for initial comments prior to a detailed evaluation. An implementation plan addressing strategic themes will then be formed in conjunction with the SLWG.
- Autism Strategy, where feedback is informing a review with support from Autism Network Scotland, which will focus on core principles.
- Client Reviews, which will be prioritised looking at repatriation, ordinary residence, sleepovers, Significant Care Packages, and over-provision.

- Workforce Review, with initial feedback informed by workforce capacity and demand suggesting an integrated Learning Disability and Autism Service. This would be across the HSCP with Team Leads incorporating matrix management.
- Service Review, consisting of an evaluation framework to ensure transparency and accountability of the process, with data collation and analysis underway.
- Transitions Management, based on predictive demand forecast data which is being sought to develop proactive approaches for individuals moving from Children's to Adult Services.

Similarly a strategic group looking at Mental Health and Dementia has also been established. SLWGs have been identified to advance work in Inpatient Services, Dementia services including development of a local dementia strategy, Community Mental Health Services review and outcomes, Psychological Therapies, and Care Reviews.

5.4 Strategic Planning and Performance: The West of Scotland Regional Health and Social Care delivery plan discussion document has now been issued for comment and feedback across IJBs, Health Boards and councils. An Argyll and Bute stakeholder engagement event will take place on 23rd November in Lochgilphead, with the IJB considering the draft response on 27th November. Following consideration of this feedback an updated plan will be submitted to Health Boards and IJBs in January and February 2019, with the final approval then made by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport.

The current Strategic Plan for how the HSCP will transform and deliver its services runs from April 2016 to March 2019, with the plan for April 2019 to March 2022 now being developed. Over the last three months feedback has been sought from local residents, service user and carer representatives, partners, and staff on eight specific service change areas – Children's Services, Care Homes and Housing, Learning Disability Services, Community Models of Care, Primary Care Services, Hospital Services and Corporate Services. Over the coming months the final plan will be produced and consulted on, with final approval by the IJB due in March 2019.

The HSCP has undertaken a review of the arrangements and structure for locality planning. The preferred option following a stakeholder engagement workshop in September was a reduction in the number of locality planning groups from nine to four. Benefits will include reduced bureaucracy, consistency of approach, alignment with community planning structures, and a clearer focus on delivery of strategic objectives. Following agreement by the Strategic Planning Group this is now being presented to the IJB for approval.

A single information system and shared care record has been identified by front line staff as key to developing a person centred approach and single health and care team. Since the last report in March 2018 progress on this has been slower than expected, primarily due to differing cyber security standards in the NHS and council. There is also a need to upgrade network infrastructure and for prioritisation of NHS Highland IT funding of “portal software” to allow secure viewing of records across different systems.

The critical importance of this work has been flagged within the HSCP strategic risk register, as it is restricting co-location plans and integrated working. This compromises the delivery of cost improvements and productivity gains across services. A revised schedule of requirements and timescales has been developed, with some areas now completed.

- 5.5 Finance:** Latest projections based on month 7 figures are for a year end overspend of £4.1m, of which £2.1m is in Social Care and £2m in Health Services. While this amount is fluctuating on a month to month basis, as yet there is no clear downward trend that would be needed to deliver services within the available finances this year.

The IJB has asked that discretionary spend within the HSCP be minimised, and all staff have now been instructed to; curtail expenditure to essential items, critically review locum and agency requests, improve stock and stationary control measures, reduce printing and postage costs, consider energy efficiency, reduce travel costs, and ensure near patient testing is used in efficient and appropriate ways.

While there is a focus on controlling spend during the current financial year, ideas for further savings are also being sought from the workforce, and development of the Quality and Finance Plan for 2019-20 onwards continues. There is also recognition that if potential savings are identified that these should be brought forward at the earliest opportunity and not necessary linked to the cycle of delivery in a specific financial year.

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:** The STAG for Craignure is underway with public consultation being carried out to inform the study. The STAG will report on the likely works needed at Craignure to support this key ferry route. The existing pier is approximately 60 years old and is unable to

accommodate some of the larger vessels in the existing fleet. Furthermore, with the introduction of RET vehicular traffic has increased significantly and the forecasts suggest that the increase will continue. Carrying out the STAG now is a proactive move by Argyll and Bute Council to ensure that sound planning is in place for the future needs of this important route.

Works are underway at Rothesay, Bute to carry out major repairs to the berthing face of the pier and to fill in a significant void below the pier. Basically the thrusting action from berthing vessels has washed out material within and behind the pier wall. A wave screen is being constructed to provide an impenetrable barrier capable of withstanding the forces from vessels and the water they displace. To the rear of this screen a grouting operation will be carried out to fill the void. We are working closely with Calmac to communicate any changes to service during these essential works.

6.3 Waste Strategy: Officers continue to develop the council's Waste Strategy ahead of the changes in legislation in 2021. The team provided a very informative presentation to Members in September which helped explain this very complex area of the service. Officers are also working on a presentation for a member's development day, date to be confirmed but expected early in the New Year.

6.4 Northern Roads Collaboration Forum: The most recent meeting of the Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee was hosted by Argyll and Bute Council in Kilmory on 26th October. Collaborative work continues to be progressed by the group in areas such as marine and procurement. Argyll and Bute are leading on a piece of collaborative work considering the role of the designated person across all the NRCF member authorities.

6.5 Winter and Severe Weather Response: As temperatures noticeably plummet our winter maintenance teams are out treating our road network. The public are reminded to drive extra cautiously during long cold spells as road temperatures are often much lower than the air temperature and can cause challenging driving conditions.

During October our operations team were busy dealing with flooding in the Lochavullin area of Oban. This was due in part to high tidal conditions compounded by onshore winds which slowed the release of water from the Black Lynn Burn, the tidal action of sea water coming into the burn, high levels of surface water flowing into the burn from the surrounding area during very heavy rainfall and the Lochavullin area being particularly low-lying. Officers are considering flood mitigation measures for this vulnerable area.

6.6 Roads Reconstruction Programme: The majority of the council's 2018/19 roads reconstruction programme is complete or nearing completion. There

has been further focus on surface dressing to maximise the surface area treated. This not only seals the carriageway surface but also improves the surface friction making a safer surface for motorists. Surface dressing seals hair line cracks which in turn prevents the ingress of water which is one of the biggest causes of the pot hole. Surface dressing helps to ensure we have a greater proportion of right first time planned repairs and a reduction in reactive unplanned works.

- 6.7 A83 Rest and Be Thankful:** On Tuesday 9th October, a large landslide occurred on the A83 Rest and Be Thankful following a period of prolonged heavy rain. This was followed by further landslips and a total of approx. 3,000 tonnes of material is estimated to have fallen down the hillside. Within this material there were three large boulders, the largest weighing 75 tonnes, identified as a safety risk and both the A83 and the Old Military Road were closed. BEAR's teams worked hard to clear the debris and make safe the large boulders. On Monday 15 October the Old Military Road was able to be opened for public use and the A83 opened soon after on Thursday 18 October. I would like to record my thanks for the hard work of the teams involved.

The Council Leader will be meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity to discuss future options for bringing a permanent solution to the Rest and Be Thankful.

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

- 7.1 Introduction:** This is my report as Policy Lead for Community, Housing, Islands and Gaelic and covers the period from the last Council meeting in September to 29th November 2018 and aims to highlight developments within my portfolio.
- 7.2 COSLA:** COSLA meetings I have attended over the last two months include the Community Well Being Board, the COSLA Police Scrutiny Committee, and I also represented COSLA at the Crofting Stakeholders Forum. I will also be going to the Scottish Government/COSLA event on Housing Beyond 2021. Public papers from those meetings can be viewed by members if they so wish.
- 7.3 Housing:**
Affordable Housing delivered on Islay: 20 new affordable houses were opened in Bowmore on 4th October. ACHA is the landlord and the Council contributed £240, 000 in Strategic Housing Fund to the project. There continues to be a high level of housing need and demand on Islay and the Council is working pro-actively with both ACHA and West Highland Housing Association to deliver affordable housing solutions on the island.

Castle Wood, Helensburgh: I recently met with some of our housing staff in Helensburgh and also had a site visit with ACHA staff to the new development at Castle Wood, Helensburgh. This development of 38 units is absolutely superb and of high standard.

Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan: The Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan is due on for submission on 31st December 2018 and officers are working on the Council's proposals. The plan will focus on three main aspects of work;

1. Prevention
2. Less time spent in temporary tenancies
3. Sustaining permanent tenancies

All this is underpinned by a robust support model delivered in partnership between housing, mental health and addiction services.

The Scottish Government is calling for a five-year transition plan to reduce homelessness and where people do become homeless that they are rehousing in permanent accommodation as quickly as possible.

The proposal drafted to date has a large workload in the initial years of transition, followed by consolidation and in the final year (2023-2024) a reduction of the transition resources and redesign of the homeless service to embed the principles of rapid rehousing. The resourcing of the plan from the Scottish Government will be critical to its success. The proposals being presented will cost an approximate additional £2.5m over the five years of transition.

The timescale for submission is very tight and a final version of the plan is a few weeks away yet but any member who wishes to view the draft plan and discuss any aspect of the proposal should contact Bill Halliday who will be more than happy to provide and discuss.

Home Energy Efficiency Programme (HEEP) Area Based Scheme: Due to the popularity of the council's HEEP: ABS insulation programme, Argyll and Bute Council Housing Services approached the Scottish Government to identify any additional funding opportunities for the programme. As a result, an additional £159,807 of funding has been allocated to the programme; and any additional Scottish Government funding opportunities will be explored as and when they become available to assist with the programme. This therefore means that the revised budget for the council's HEEPS: ABS 2018/19 programme is £1,835,737.00.

Empty Homes Officer of the Year Nomination: Kelly Ferns, Empty Homes Officer with Housing Services, has been nominated as Outstanding Individual at the Scottish Empty Homes Champions of the Year awards. One of her projects has also been nominated in the Best Before and After

Photography category. The awards ceremony will take place in Stirling on Monday 26th November and I will be attending that event to support our officer and show the council's appreciation in the valued work that she and others do in this field.

- 7.4 Community Planning and Community Development:** The Community Planning Partnership's Management Committee had its annual Development Day on 19 September. The Improvement Service led workshops following a self-assessment process which highlighted real strengths in leadership, community engagement and participation and governance. The findings of the Improvement Service's action-learning workshops were also presented at a conference in Glasgow which highlighted best practice in local community planning through having community members in key roles such as the Chair/Vice Chair – a practice we have had in Argyll and Bute for a couple of years now.

Participation requests – the request by Inspiralba to improve the equipment in Jock's Playpark has been approved by Development and Infrastructure and the community group will now move forward with spending their grant on equipment improvements and repairs. Council officers participated in an interview with Glasgow Caledonian University who have been commissioned to look at the impact and usefulness of Participation Requests.

Some highlights from Community Development's work with communities across the council are:

- We have been supporting and promoting the work of Bute Community Cycling Club and their plan for cycle repair hubs around the island and a Cycle Hub drop in to offer general advice on cycling to the community and visitors.
- Blairmore Village Trust did really well at the Beautiful Scotland awards and won a Gold. They also received a trophy for the winners in the Coastal Village Category. They were quick to praise the help they received from Council Departments. They sent an email thanking the Community Development Team, Roads, Amenities and Community Justice Team for all their support.
- The Scottish Government are planning a Democracy Matters Event in Oban in December and Community Development have been meeting with groups that support harder to engage people such as elderly, young people, carers and homeless people in advance of this to explain what the consultation is. The introduction has been well received and we are hoping for a good diverse turnout on the day.
- Tralee Beach Community Right to Buy – a public meeting was held on 19th October and a steering group has been formed. The group is looking to meet over the next two weeks and progress forming a

SCIO or company to submit a formal expression of interest in the Community Right to Buy the beach.

- There was a well-attended launch of the 66days health promotion event in Lochgilphead and 80 people attended to explore ways to improve their health, with market stalls and taster sessions on offer.
- Kintyre Link Club were very pleased at the turnout to their planning day and the support they got from Health partners and elected members and we will be supporting the Club on their plan for funding to support sustainability of the group.
- Loch Long Jetty Association (LLJA) is celebrating after being awarded an £84,000 grant from the Garfield Weston Foundation. The funding will help the charity provide a pontoon and visitor moorings for the use of Arrochar residents and visitors. The Helensburgh and Lomond Community Development Officer has been working with the group over the last 6 months to develop a business plan and complete funding applications. Congratulations to the committee for their hard work and dedication in securing this vital funding.
- The Welcome In are hosting a volunteer information event on the 8th November at the Helensburgh Parish Church. The Council's Community Development team has closely supported the group to develop required policies and create an induction pack for volunteers.

7.5 Gaelic: The Royal National Mod in Dunoon was a great success and I was very proud to officially open the event. As a Mod venue, Dunoon offered some excellent and well-equipped venues thanks to the newly refurbished Queen's Hall, two relatively new schools and a restored Burgh Hall. The festival is estimated to have generated in the region of £2m for the local economy, hence the reason why the competition to host the Mod is becoming ever stiffer. I'm very grateful to everyone involved in running this year's Mod, especially the local organising committee and all the volunteers and sponsors.

Arrangements are now underway for the second Argyll Gaelic Gathering in Oban on 2nd March 2019. I'm delighted to say that the Depute First Minister has accepted our invitation to be the Key Note Speaker. More details of the event will feature in my next Policy Lead Report.

7.6 Islands: On 4th October I deputised for the leader of the Council at the Islands Strategic Group which was held at the Scottish Parliament and chaired by the Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands, Paul Wheelhouse. This was the first time the group had met since July 2017. Matters discussed included the Islands Act, the National Islands Plan and a review of the work of the Islands Strategic Group. I also raised the recent problems associated with Calmac ferries and the urgent need for the

Scottish Government to order replacement vessels. A full report of this meeting will be given to the Argyll Islands Strategic Group when it meets on 30th November.

- 7.7 Money Skills Advice (MSA) Project:** Members will recall that council officers and provider organisations have been seeking a substantial change to the payment model and administrative arrangements around the MSA project to make it financially viable to deliver. The Big Lottery Fund (BLF) have confirmed that the Managing Authority has agreed our change request for the project. The next stage will be the change request between us and BLF – their project manager is hopeful that this will be signed in November. Once this is achieved, council officers will confirm which providers are still engaged on the programme, make the required changes to the payment model and administrative procedures, and relaunch the project through appropriate promotions. The agreement should also mean the potential for a retrospective claim to be made by provider organisations and for a payment to be made once verified.

8. POLICY LEAD FOR EDUCATION – Councillor Yvonne McNeilly

- 8.1 School Visits:** I have been visiting a number of our schools around the area over the past several weeks. My first trip was to Tarbert Academy, before following the road to Clachan Primary School where we were treated to a lovely school lunch, and then headed for Campbeltown.

- Tarbert Academy is overseen by Head Teacher Neil McKnight who has been in post since 2013. This is a fairly small secondary school however it achieves well and the community support the school which has been useful to widen the curriculum for example, some of the seniors had access to boat building.
- Clachan Primary School is run by Head Teacher Lucy Blake who has been in post since 2014, and undertook the Into Headship Qualification and Argyll and Bute Education Leader Programme. This is a fairly small school and is very community orientated – the school is very “eco work” having achieved two green flags.
- Campbeltown Grammar School is run by Head Teacher David Fyfe who took on the role in April this year. The newly built school is a stunning building to walk around. The Concert Wind Band has held the British Championship twice and the Kintyre Schools Pipe Band, based in the school, currently holds the Cowal, Scottish, British, European and World championship at novice juvenile grade

Next on the list was a visit to the MAKI and Oban areas visiting Inveraray and Dalmally Primary Schools, Lochnell Primary and Barcaldine Primary.

- Inveraray has an outdoor learning environment at the heart of their work and is strongly rooted in the community. Dalmally is also strongly rooted in the community and the two schools work closely together having joint training and bringing together the children for learning events.
- Lochnell Primary has been run for 17 years by Head Teacher Shirley Matheson. The school is very popular and works well with cluster schools.

Barcaldine Primary is led by Head Teacher Julie Watson who has been in post for 4 years and was one of the very first group of students trained in Argyll when we had a partnership with Strathclyde.

8.2 Free Sanitary Products for Schools: There has been a consultation with primary and secondary schools to gain the thinking of pupils as to how the distribution of products is going to be managed within the Scottish Government's principles. All schools have received a financial allocation for both products and storage.

Further information can be found on the Young Scot website at <https://young.scot/access-to-sanitary-products/>

8.3 Schools Photo Competition – Promoting our pupils and Argyll and Bute: The council's Communication Team, along with members of staff across the Council, have increased the profile of the Council's social media, and we are now the most followed council Instagram in Scotland. As part of the council's drive to attract more people to live, work and invest in Argyll and Bute, the theme of the competition was simply **#abplace2b** – meaning pupils are encouraged to take photos of scenery, places, wildlife or whatever else they think shows our area at its best

Pictures of Argyll and Bute help to showcase the area to people in Scotland and the UK, and even further afield. It's wonderful to see new pictures every day, and we would love to see pictures taken by our pupils also getting recognition. Young people often have a unique take on the world around them and I'm sure we will get some excellent entries for this competition. The most important thing, though, is to have fun and to get out and about and enjoy Argyll and Bute during the school break. The competition closed on 26th October and judging the entries was a very tough job. However, first prize was awarded to Tarbert Academy's Choe Twynham for her beautiful picture of a rainbow over Tarbert, shown below.



If you are not already following the council's Instagram page, below is the link to the page which I would encourage you to take the opportunity to look at the fantastic photos taken across our beautiful area by our very talented young people. <https://www.instagram.com/argyllandbute/?hl=en>

- 8.4 New Autumn/Winter School Lunch Menu:** Pupils from across Argyll and Bute have an active role in creating their school lunch menus and young people from Lochgilphead Primary were only too happy to show off the delicious food on offer when I visited the school in late September. The primary school menu is revised twice a year and is designed in consultation with the children through pupil focus groups. This helps to ensure that they have a say in the menu choices and get an understanding of the importance of having a balanced diet. Teaching staff, catering staff, NHS dieticians and parents also contribute.

It was an absolute pleasure to visit the school canteen at Lochgilphead Joint Campus and see first-hand the delicious lunches on offer to our young people. The staff are extremely hardworking and do a tremendous job, and the children all behaved remarkably. They are a credit to the school.

- 8.5 Scottish Learning Festival:** Education Scotland have written to the council to thank Port Ellen Primary and Parklands Primary who both took part in this year's Scottish Learning Festival. This year's theme focused on collaborating for improvement and was attended by more than 4,500 delegates. The significant contributions from the practitioners at these schools helped to enrich the programme and stimulate debate and discussion amongst the audience who attended from many sectors of the education community. Education Scotland have thanked both schools for their "excellent preparation, willingness and enthusiasm" to deliver the sessions so effectively – well done to both schools.

8.6 Oban High School teams up with Norwegian school: Oban High has teamed up with a secondary school from Norway to look at what can be learned from the sharing of best practice across education systems for pupils aged 16 years and over. The school's head teacher, Peter Bain, has also been selected to lead an international project on behalf of The Scottish College for Educational Leadership (SCEL). Mailand videregående skole in Norway was carrying out an evaluation of the opportunities available in Scottish schools for young people seeking work or further education, and got in touch with Oban High School to see if they could form a professional exchange programme, focusing specifically on post-16 education. The Executive Director, Councillor Kieron Green and I joined staff on 30th October at Oban High School where we met the staff from the Norwegian school.

It's very encouraging when Argyll and Bute's innovation and hard work is recognised by others – especially by professional peers as in this case. Our visitors from Norway responded very positively to all they saw at Oban High School and I'm sure that this will be yet another example of international links and working relationships between Argyll and Bute's schools and Education Service and their counterparts in other countries.

Something that particularly impressed me was the example set by our four young student leaders for the visit. Caitlyn, Katie, Maria and Darrell have an important role at Oban High School – to support other and younger pupils with any issues which could impact on a positive learning experience. The dedication that each of them showed was incredible – they showed real team work and they are clearly very committed to ensuring that they support their fellow students as much as possible. They are a true credit to Oban High School and its teaching team.

Staff from the Norwegian school visited Oban last October (2017) and, following a highly successful and positive trip, a project plan was established. At the same time, Gillian Hamilton, Strategic Director at Education Scotland, which recently welcomed the Scottish College for Educational Leadership (SCEL), learned of this collaboration and asked Mr Bain to select a team of head teachers from across Scotland, and take a delegation to Norway to carry out a wider piece of work based on the SCEL learning themes. Peter Bain's aims are about sharing good practice with a focus on improvement and building capacity, from the perspective of strategy and learning and teaching.

This is a truly excellent opportunity for us to showcase some of the great work that's being done in Argyll and Bute. Argyll and Bute is above the national average for the number of young people aged between 16 and 19 who are currently in employment, education or training – putting us in the top 8 of Scotland's 32 local authority areas. This new partnership with

Norway will allow us to promote Argyll and Bute as a great place to live work and learn, but it will also enable us to exchange ideas and continue to grow to ensure our young people are given every opportunity to move on to positive destinations.

- 8.7 Positive destinations, successful pathways:** I welcome recent figures which show that the number of young people in the area who are on the path to sustainable employment is well above the national average. Participation measure figures, released by Skills Development Scotland, show that 94.2% of young people in Argyll and Bute aged between 16 and 19 are currently in employment, education or training – the national average being 91.8%. This means Argyll and Bute is in the top 8 of 32 local authority areas.

This report 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. The council has also developed its own award-winning modern apprenticeship scheme. We are committed to ensuring that our young people are equipped to secure and sustain positive destinations and achieve success in life, and we want them to be fully aware of the opportunities that are out there.

- 8.8 Recruitment:** Recruitment is an issue across the board in terms of Education and this issue was discussed at a Summit on Sustaining Education held in Inverness on 14th September. Argyll and Bute Council has been working in partnership with the Universities of Dundee and the Highlands and Islands to agree a programme, which will see secondary student teachers based in local schools over an 18 month period.

Recruitment of Head Teacher posts have included promotional material from Parent Councils. Joint headships have been established where appropriate. Two Argyll and Bute delegates attended a recruitment fayre in Belfast to attract post graduates students planning on entering teaching as probationers to Scotland and identifying Argyll and Bute as where they would like to undertake their placement.

We are also focusing on 'growing our own' and recruiting teachers to subjects that have national shortages. Subjects currently being offered are primary, chemistry, computing, home economics, maths and physics – all of which are experiencing a shortage of qualified teachers across Scotland. This has been achieved by a partnership with UHI.

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

- 9.1 Planning (Scotland) Bill:** The Planning (Scotland) Bill is currently at Stage 2 of the Parliamentary process and the Local Government and Communities Committee as the lead committee have now completed seven rounds of considering amendments to the Bill. It is expected that the Bill will move to Stage 3 of the process in early 2019.
- 9.2 Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2):** Planning officers continue to work on the policy writing, mapping, Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment, Habitat Regulation Assessment and Action Programme for LDP2 and it is anticipated that the draft plan will be ready for consideration by members in the New Year before going out to public consultation.
- 9.3 Simplified Planning Zones:** Argyll and Bute Council were one of two councils who were successful in a bid to take part in a pilot project regarding Simplified Planning Zones in 2016 and two sites were identified to take forward, one in Salen and one in Lochgilphead. Initial grant funding for the project was £29,425 and recently a further grant of £16,225 for promotion of the Lochgilphead site was realised through the Self Build Challenge Fund.
- 9.4 Planning Convenors Meeting:** On 5th and 6th November I attended a planning convenors meeting in Edinburgh organised by the Chief Planner at the Scottish Government, John McNairney. Topics discussed on the day included an update on the Planning (Scotland) Bill, Building to Rent, Elected Member Training, planning sites for gypsy travellers and betting/pay day lending shops. There was also a Ministerial Address by Kevin Stewart MSP, Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning, followed by a question and answer session with most questions centred around the Planning Bill.
- 9.5 A-Boards Enforcement:** Town centre surveys have been completed in Dunoon, Oban and Helensburgh and officers are currently consulting with ABC Roads and Transport Scotland on unauthorised A-Boards to complete an initial assessment of planning enforcement liabilities and opportunities for resolution and it is anticipated that a report will be presented to the Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee in December with their findings and recommendations for further actions.
- 9.6 Planning:** Planning fee income to the end of September 2018 provided a surplus of £132k from the forecast budget following the submission of a number high value applications for the financial year to date.

9.7 Training and Development: The Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee continue to receive training through 'bite sized' sessions normally held prior to the monthly committee meetings. Recent topics have included Local Review Bodies, Simplified Planning Zones and a visit/walk around Inveraray CARS. The training sessions are open to all councillors.

9.8 Building Standards: Building Standards income remains above budget primarily as a result of ongoing commercialisation providing verifier services to City of Edinburgh Council, Scottish Borders and Babcocks who are using their services on a weekly basis. The team's performance on vetting Building Warrant applications remains above their charter promise and their customer satisfaction rating remains constant at 100%.

Building Standards were the first service within the council to be accredited for Customer Service Excellence and they have successfully passed a number of audits in recent years to retain the award. They are due to be audited for their CSE award on 6th December.

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 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 – 15th November 2018

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