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MINUTES of MEETING of ARGYLL ISLANDS STRATEGIC GROUP held in the COMMITTEE ROOM 1, KILMORY, LOCHGILPHEAD on FRIDAY, 30 NOVEMBER 2018

Present: Councillor Robin Currie (Chair)

Councillor Mary-Jean Devon
Councillor Jean Moffat
Councillor Elaine Robertson

Councillor Jim Lynch
Councillor Alastair Redman

Attending: Pippa Milne, Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure Services
Fergus Murray, Head of Economic Development and Strategic Transformation
Shirley MacLeod, Area Governance Manager
Stuart Green, Corporate Support Manager
Colin Young, Senior Transportation Delivery Officer
Bill Halliday, Team Leader – West
Dannie Onn, Island Liaison Partner, Scottish Government
Ralph Throp, Island Liaison Partner, Scottish Government
Richard Hadfield, Transport Scotland
Brian Gordon, Transport Scotland

1. APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and general introductions were made.

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of:-

Councillor Anne Horn
Councillor Sir Jamie McGrigor
Councillor Aileen Morton
Councillor Len Scoullar
Cleland Sneddon, Chief Executive

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest intimated.

3. MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE ARGYLL ISLANDS STRATEGIC GROUP HELD ON TUESDAY, 28 AUGUST 2018

The Minute of the previous meeting of the Argyll Islands Strategic Group held on 28 August 2018, was approved as a true record.

4. NATIONAL ISLANDS GROUP MEETING INCLUDING UPDATE FROM HSCP REGARDING SELF-DIRECTED SUPPORT ON THE ISLANDS

The Chair provided an update in relation to the National Islands Group Meeting held on 4 October 2018, which was Chaired by the Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands Paul Wheelhouse, MSP. Councillor Currie advised that the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 requires that the Scottish Government make a provision for a National Islands Plan; to impose duties in relation to island communities on certain public authorities; to make provision about the electoral representation of island communities and to establish a

licensing scheme in respect of marine development adjacent to the islands. Councillor Currie also advised of the Shetland Mapping requirement; the development of a mechanism for Island Communities Impact Assessments (ICIAs) and guidance; the possibility that waste regulations may need to be reviewed in respect of island communities and ferry services.

General discussion took place in respect of the Island Community Impact Assessments, with the group noting that the mechanism was not yet in place, however, that this provided an opportunity for Argyll and Bute to be at the forefront of driving forward the implications of the 2018 Act. Both Island Liaison Directors, Dannie Onn and Ralph Throp agreed to look to establish a contact within the Policy group at the Scottish Government and provide feedback in this regard to the Area Governance Manager.

Decision

The Argyll Islands Strategic Group agreed to note the contents of the report.

(Ref: Reports from National Islands Group Meeting, dated 4 October 2018, submitted.)

5. ISLANDS TRANSPORT GROUP

The group gave consideration to a verbal update from the Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure Services, who advised that the latest meeting of the Islands Transport Group had taken place on Thursday, 25 October 2018. She advised that both the Leader of the Council, Councillor Aileen Morton and the Head of Roads and Amenity Services, Jim Smith had attended the meeting by audio link. Ms Milne provided a brief outline of the issues discussed, which included additional funding for improvements to the CalMac fleet; block booking issues on CalMac ferries; the regionisation of transport governance; the implications of Brexit, which included passport and border checks and the discount scheme for air fares. She advised that Councillor Morton had raised the issue of the need for a replacement ferry for Islay. Discussion took place in respect of the tourism industry and the need for transport infrastructure to be improved within the West Coast. The Head of Economic Development and Strategic Transformation advised that work on the Rural Growth Deal had highlighted that transport connectivity was a top priority for Argyll and Bute. Mr Murray advised that the Council had submitted their Rural Growth Deal proposal to both the Scottish and the UK Governments.

Ms Milne advised that further information on the meeting of the Islands Transport Group, held on 25 October 2018 could be found at :-

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/meeting-papers-25-october-2018-islands-transport-forum/>

Decision

The Argyll Islands Strategic Group agreed to note the information provided.

6. ISLANDS (SCOTLAND) ACT

The Argyll Islands Strategic Group noted that information on the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 had been covered during discussions at agenda item 4 (National Islands Group Meeting including update from HSCP regarding self-directed support in the Islands).

The Chair enquired as to whether there was an update from the Island Liaison Directors.

Dannie Onn advised that he was one of the civil servants appointed to the Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands area. He advised of meetings he had had with the Community Council and Community Development Company on the Isle of Colonsay and was in the process of setting up meetings with the communities on both Islay and Jura. He advised that he was hoping to visit the Isle of Gigha in the New Year.

Ralph Throp advised that he had been appointed as Island Liaison Director for the Bute and Cowal area, and was keen to improve links and get information that will add value to the work of others. Mr Throp advised that he was happy to take guidance from local Members on the best way forward.

The Chair advised that the Group appreciated the attendance of Mr Onn and Mr Throp at the meeting and thanked them for their input.

7. REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY UPDATE

The group gave consideration to a report which outlined the main aims and objectives of the National Transport Strategy Review and set out a timeline for producing a draft Strategy for a full public consultation with the revised National Transport Strategy being delivered in July 2019. Appendix 1 of the report outlined the top transport priorities for Argyll and Bute.

Discussion took place in respect of the short timescales involved in the consultation phase of the review; green travel and the possibility of increasing the winter timetable from Oban to Craignure to ensure that local people can effectively travel for employment purposes.

Decision

The Argyll Islands Strategic Group agreed:

1. to note Appendix 1 as top transport priorities for Argyll and Bute to support inclusive economic growth and social inclusion;
2. that Appendix 1 be used and referred to in pursuing support from the Minister of Transport and to feed into the response to the consultation on National Transport Strategy ; and
3. that a report outlining the consultation response on the National Transport Strategy be brought to the next Meeting of the Group in February 2019 for agreement.

(Ref: Report by Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure Services, dated 30 November 2018, submitted.)

8. TRANSPORT SCOTLAND'S VESSEL REPLACEMENT AND DEPLOYMENT PLAN

The group gave consideration to a presentation by the Head of Ferries Policy and Planning at Transport Scotland outlining the current Vessel Replacement and Deployment Plan, which sits beneath and supports the implementation of the current Ferries Plan. Mr Hadfield advised on the plans to move forward; the current governance arrangements; the

roles of Transport Scotland, CMAL, CalMac, Harbour Authorities and Stakeholders and outlined the relationship with Argyll and Bute through the Argyll Ferry Infrastructure Group. Mr Hadfield provided information on the Network Strategy Steering Group and the new Vessel Programming Plan, and explained that the Ferries Plan is a one-off ten year plan, which is different from the Vessel Replacement and Deployment Plan. Brian Gordon, also of Transport Scotland explained the changes brought about by the Ferries Plan 2012, which included the implementation of the Campbeltown to Ardrossan crossing in 2013. Mr Hadfield explained that the annual Vessel Replacement and Deployment Plan is based on the carriage figures of the previous year.

Further discussion took place in respect of the resilience within the fleet; the pressure on routes that lose a vessel to another route; other possible solutions for port and harbour facilities, particularly on the Isle of Mull; the fare structure since the introduction of RET and the difficulties faced in linking timetables with other forms of public transport.

Mr Hadfield advised that the next Vessel Replacement and Deployment Plan was currently in development and outlined the timeline leading up to the publication in March 2019.

The Chair thanked both Mr Hadfield and Mr Gordon for the information provided.

Decision

The Argyll Islands Strategic Group agreed:-

1. to note the contents of the presentation; and
2. to invite Transport Scotland to attend a future meeting to provide an update on the Vessel Replacement and Deployment Plan for 2019.

(Ref: Presentation by Transport Scotland, dated 30 November 2018, submitted.)

Councillor Mary-Jean Devon left the meeting at 12.35pm.

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9. AIR SERVICES CONSULTATION

The group gave consideration to a report which presented the findings of the Argyll Air Services Public Services Obligation (PSO) Review, which was commissioned by Derek Halden Consultancy (DGC) in June 2018. Discussion took place in respect of the possibility of opening channels with the Scottish Government to progress PSO discussions.

The current issues faced by HIAL fire services was also discussed. The Head of Economic Development and Strategic Transformation agreed to provide a briefing note in this regard.

Decision

The Argyll Islands Strategic Group agreed to note:

1. the commitment of Argyll and Bute Council to ensure the views of the residents, businesses and visitors influence the continued development of Argyll Air Services;

2. the growth in reliance on the Argyll Air Services by island residents and businesses since the introduction of the service in 2008;
3. the savings accrued by the public sector through use of the Argyll Air Services to deliver essential services to the islands;
4. the opportunities to grow the use of Argyll Air Services, with a commensurate reduction in per passenger subsidy; and
5. the recognised need to amend the service schedule to ensure it serves island needs and remains financially sustainable.

(Ref: Report by Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure Services, dated 30 November 2018, submitted)

10. ARGYLL ISLANDS HOUSING NEEDS

The group gave consideration to a report detailing the delivery of affordable housing and proposed housing delivery on the islands of Argyll through the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) in the current Local Housing Strategy (LHS) period 2016-2021. The report outlined the Housing Needs and Demands Assessment (HNDA) process and provided detail on when the work on the next HNDA would begin.

Decision

The Argyll and the Islands Strategic Group agreed to note the content of the report.

(Ref: Report by Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure Services, dated 30 November 2018, submitted.)

11. ADDITIONAL BRIEFING ON THE FUEL POVERTY (TARGET, DEFINITION AND STRATEGY) (SCOTLAND) BILL

The group gave consideration to a briefing note providing information on the Fuel Poverty (Target, Definition and Strategy (Scotland)) Bill. It outlined the four key aims of the Bill; the proposed changes to the definition of fuel poverty; how the change rates of fuel poverty affects local authority areas; how the needs of rural, remote rural and island communities are taken into account in the measurement of Fuel Poverty and how the UK minimum income standard is calculated.

Decision

The group agreed to note the contents of the briefing note and welcomed the fact that both Bill Halliday, Team Leader – West and Alasdair Calder, Housing Officer would be giving evidence to the Committee considering the Bill.

(Ref: Scottish Government Briefing Note, submitted)

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To accommodate the diary commitments of some Members, the Argyll Islands Strategic Group agreed that the next meeting would take place on Wednesday, 27 February 2019 at 10.00am within the Council Chambers, Kilmory, Lochgilphead.

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