
18th April 2019

LEADER'S REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** This report gives colleagues an update on my activities as Leader of Argyll and Bute Council from 15th November 2018 to 5th April 2019. It also includes an update in relation to my Policy Lead portfolio, Economic Development. Also included is a progress update on the Priorities for the Life of the Council, attached at Appendix 1.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

3. TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE WORKING GROUP, Arrochar, 19th November 2018

- 3.1** Members may recall from the last Leader's Report to council in November, my update on a meeting with Michael Matheson, Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity. As well as a discussion on the Rural Growth Deal, the meeting focused on honouring a commitment made by his predecessor, Humza Yousaf, to establish a transport infrastructure working group to take a strategic approach to all of Argyll and Bute's distinct travel and transport issues, and their impact on other objectives like inclusive economic growth, resilience and more. People in Argyll and Bute have made it clear that transport connectivity is a top priority for them and that they see it as a main opportunity and threat in relation to economic

growth. A strategic approach to this is therefore vital as we seek to increase our population and boost the economy.

While the Cabinet Secretary indicated that he would not be able to attend meetings himself, he did offer his support in terms of bringing the relevant agencies together.

The first meeting took place in Arrochar on 19th November and included representatives from the following organisations:

- Argyll and Bute Council – members and officers
- Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMAL)
- Transport Scotland
- HITRANS
- Argyll Timber Transport Group
- Caledonian MacBrayne
- Strathclyde Passenger Transport

The meeting offered an opportunity to discuss together a wide range of transport matters, including:

- Transport Scotland's Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) which will review all transport modes across the country, gathering issues, objectives and appraising available options.
- Lifeline trunk routes – Transport Scotland carrying out an exercise to identify areas most affected by closures alongside the STPR engagement activity which will seek evidence from stakeholders and communities about the impact of closures.
- Rest and Be Thankful – linked to the above, the focus was on closure and in particular the importance of effective communications in that regard. Future meetings will focus on this.
- Improved rail links with central belt – there is need for improvement on both the West Highland and Helensburgh lines, especially given the potential tie-in to the Rural Growth Deal and rail links to Faslane.
- Ferry services – specialist representation will be required at a future meeting given the importance of lifeline ferry services across Argyll and Bute.

Since that meeting Transport Scotland have contacted all councils in relation to the STPR, and substantial engagement is expected to take place throughout this year ahead of the publication of the National Transport Review at the end of 2019.

4. ARGYLL AND BUTE COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE, Helensburgh, 20th November 2018

- 4.1 The CPP Management Committee met in Helensburgh in November and members will be very familiar with the key issues featuring on that agenda.

Alongside updates on the Rural Growth Deal and the Local Governance Review, the committee considered the Community Planning Partnership's annual report as well as updates from local areas.

Other headline items were:

- Overview of the new structure of Argyll and Bute Alcohol and Drugs Partnership
- An update from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)
- The Third Sector Interface (TSI) performance framework from new Chief Executive Kirsteen Murray

5. COSLA LEADERS MEETINGS, 30th November 2018

- 5.1 I attended the November COSLA Leaders session in Edinburgh on 30th November along with the Chief Executive. The agenda items were:

- Local Governance Review update
- Planning (Scotland) Bill update
- Scotland's Future Employability Services
- Local Authorities Working to Tackle Depopulation
- Spending Review
- Local Government Pay Negotiations update and new proposal
- Brexit update
- Review of Structure of Scottish LG pension scheme
- Early Learning and Childcare National Standard for Funded Provision from 2020
- Access to Sanitary Products
- Review of the Main Funding Floor

The item on depopulation relates to the work instigated by ourselves in April last year following publication of the NRS population statistics which highlighted an apparent west coast trend in relation to depopulation. I have given updates on my correspondence and meetings with the leaders of the seven other west coast authorities, and later in this report I will provide more detail on our most recent meeting as part of this work, with Ben McPherson, Minister for Migration, Europe and International Development.

6. INDUSTRY AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT SOUNDING BOARD MEETINGS: 3rd December 2018 and 19th March 2019

- 6.1** The Industry and Regional Development Sounding Board has met twice during the period covered in this report – in December and most recently in March.

The rapidly shifting situation and ongoing uncertainty presents considerable challenges, but that is precisely why it is important to meet together and focus as much as we possibly and practically can on key issues of importance to Argyll and Bute which needs a particular regional policy approach – one size cannot fit all, regardless of the eventual outcome of the EU exit process.

At all meetings of the board so far we have focused on workforce planning, officer activity in relation to funding and their involvement in partnership work at a national level in relation to policy, and how we can most meaningfully engage with Argyll and Bute's business community across all industry sectors.

This last aspect was particularly in focus at the March session and our Economic Development service will continue to explore ways of engaging with the private sector as the exit process continues and also, of course, in the context of the Rural Growth Deal.

On 19th March, officers were invited along to provide an update on their activity in relation to EU exit and, along with a strategic overview from the Chief Executive, we had a useful presentation on the work of the council's EU Exit Working Group.

The board also agreed informally to convene if required at short notice depending on national developments.

7. POLICE SCOTLAND YOUTH VOLUNTEER EVENT, Helensburgh, 5th December 2018

- 7.1** Nationally, Police Scotland is progressing its Youth Volunteer Programme which aims to strengthen the relationship between young people and the police at a local level, offer opportunities for active community citizenship and also increase skills and open up potential for future career paths. I know that youth volunteers have previously attended council events and have really impressed everyone who they encountered – so it was a real pleasure to attend the launch of the programme in Helensburgh in December last year.

As well as the practical benefits for young people and the communities in which they live, this also adds to the scope for young people to be heard and to participate in local life and decision-making. This is a key priority for the council and the Community Planning Partnership, so forging links like this is really welcome and we will be exploring the potential for doing more over the coming months.

8. HMNB CLYDE STRATEGIC DELIVERY AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK BOARD (SDDF), Helensburgh, 7th December 2018

- 8.1** Following the formal submission to both the Scottish and UK Governments of our Rural Growth Deal proposals earlier in November (and covered in my previous Leader's Report) it is inevitable that the November and December periods were dominated by key meetings relating to the Deal and to strengthening the important relationships which will be so crucial to its delivery. The relationship with HMNB Clyde is one of these and it was helpful to have an opportunity to attend the SDDF Board meeting at this time.

Alongside the Rural Growth Deal update, we also heard a high level update on the Faslane Maritime Change Programme from Commodore Donald Doull. This is a highly ambitious programme focusing on the three key themes of 'develop, recapitalise and grow' to deliver urgent change during 2019 as the base gets busier and more full. He reported anecdotal evidence that new intakes of navy personnel are keen to relocate their families to the area and this is good news for our ongoing drive to grow the population.

Positive working relationships were particularly acknowledged by the meeting and these will continue to be developed given the drive for delivery during the rest of this year.

9. COSLA CONVENTION/SPECIAL LEADERS MEETING, 14th December 2018

- 9.1** The Scottish Government's initial announcement of the local government settlement came to councils on 13th December and unsurprisingly this featured heavily in discussions and conversations at the COSLA Convention and Special Leaders meetings which took place the following day, 14th December.

Both meetings took place in Cumnock, Ayrshire and were hosted on this occasion by East Ayrshire Council.

The Special Leaders formal agenda comprised just one item, held in private – the Local Government Pay Update, a rapidly shifting and arguably

contentious matter which, as colleagues will know, was only resolved some way into 2019.

Items considered by Convention were:

- Local Governance Review update
- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals – Localisation in Scotland
- Local Government Settlement (verbal update)
- Year of the Young Person
- Achieving Gender Equality in Scottish Local Government
- COSLA Strategic Review update
- COSLA Budget 2019/20 and 2020/21
- COSLA Convention and Annual Conference Recoupling
- COSLA Governance – Appointments
- EU Exit Update

Papers (where available) and associated briefings can be viewed in the Leader's Report Pack.

10. ARGYLL AND BUTE HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PARTNERSHIP SENIOR MEMBERS AND OFFICERS GROUP (SMOG) – 18th December 2018 and 12th February 2019

- 10.1** Following changes to both the composition of the Integration Joint Board and the Health and Social Care Partnership Leadership, a new Senior Members and Officers Group (SMOG) was established, meeting for the first time in October last year.

With the Scottish Government budget announcement a few days prior to the December meeting, a finance update was a key element of the agenda, along with a focus on the agenda for the January IJB meeting and a discussion on developing and improving the Board/Partnership governance.

February's session, as well as finance matters, focused on people – the Partnership has been recruiting for some key posts as well as making changes to its structure.

These sessions are useful particularly as the Partnership continues to drive forward improvement and embeds financial efficiency.

11. MEETING WITH MARTIN JONES, PRINCIPAL, ARGYLL COLLEGE UHI – 10th January 2019

- 11.1** Argyll College UHI has a key role to play in delivering the Community Planning Partnership's Local Outcomes Improvement Plan with its overarching aim of population growth and ensuring that people are able to make the most of opportunities to live, work and learn in Argyll and Bute. Former principal Fraser Durie announced his retirement last year and, after a rigorous recruitment process, Dunoon resident Martin Jones was appointed as the college's new Principal.

Given our partnership work with the college at its learning centres right across Argyll and Bute, it was helpful to have an early meeting with Martin and discuss a range of issues including our Rural Growth Deal and the role that learning/skills plays within it. This was a positive meeting and I know that the good working relationship we have with the college will continue under Martin's stewardship.

12. RURAL GROWTH DEAL UPDATE, POST-SUBMISSION - 2019

- 12.1** Colleagues will recall from the previous Leader's Report that Argyll and Bute's Rural Growth Deal was formally submitted to both the UK and Scottish Governments in November last year.

Our Economic Development officers continue to engage with civil servants in both national governments about this, with visits in the planning stages.

In terms of political engagement and progress, our MSPs continue to indicate their very positive support for our Deal proposals and their assistance has been, and will be, invaluable as we press towards securing a formal announcement for Argyll and Bute.

The focus on the exit from the European Union has inevitably placed calls on ministers' time but we are currently holding summer dates for Michael Matheson, the Scottish Government Minister responsible for overseeing Argyll and Bute's Growth Deal. Scottish Government civil servants are actively assisting us in moving towards confirmation of his visit to Argyll and Bute, and we hope to welcome him here for a full day visit to show him some of the areas which will benefit most from a Deal.



I was able to catch up briefly with Brendan O'Hara MP in January and to give him a personal copy of the formal submission. He too has offered his assistance in progressing matters from the UK Government side, where possible, and this constructive support is very much appreciated.

13. DEPOPULATION IN THE WEST COAST OF SCOTLAND – UPDATE, JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2019

13.1 On behalf of the leaders of the seven other west coast Scottish local authorities affected by depopulation, I have continued to correspond with Scottish Government Ministers asking for urgent discussions on this concerning trend and how we can work together to tackle this. Growth Deals will not solve this issue alone and it is vital for the sake of the national economy, as well as for our individual areas, to find an effective approach.

We initially wrote to Derek MacKay and Aileen Campbell, the ministers responsible for finance and local government respectively. After corresponding throughout December and January to press for an early meeting, subsequently we were able to arrange an initial meeting with Ben Macpherson, Minister for Europe, Migration and International Development, in Edinburgh on 22nd February, following the COSLA Leaders meeting that day.

Mr Macpherson was positive about our work together on this matter so far although inevitably, given the national position at this time, his focus and attention remains on the impact of the exit from the European Union. He was supportive of a further meeting with Aileen Campbell, Minister for

Communities and Local Government and, at the time of writing this report, I have had a positive response from her office agreeing to an early meeting with as many of the west coast Leaders as possible. Arrangements are still in hand and I anticipate a further update on this will be available for the report due at council in June.

In the meantime senior officers from the eight authorities continue to engage with civil servants and colleagues at COSLA on this.

14. LOCAL GOVERNMENT SETTLEMENT AND POLITICAL CORRESPONDENCE, JANUARY 2019

14.1 Like other Scottish council leaders I spent much of the December/January period processing the Scottish Government's initial local government budget allocation and contemplating, with considerable concern, the potential impacts on the communities we represent, the services we provide and the people we employ.

In previous years, financial allocations have been improved at the eleventh hour after political negotiations at Holyrood. While additional funding is always welcome, in the financial context we're currently operating in any extended delay is at best inconvenient and at worst cruel.

I wrote to all Scottish political party leaders – Nicola Sturgeon, SNP; Patrick Harvie, Scottish Green Party; Jackson Carlaw, Scottish Conservatives; Richard Leonard, Scottish Labour; and Willie Rennie, Liberal Democrats – to seek their assistance in sharpening the focus of political negotiations and doing all that they could to secure an early agreement in the budget talks.

I believe that this was a vital request to make to end the distress for thousands of hard working frontline staff and the many more thousands of people, including those most in need, who were waiting to see what would happen to the services they depend on.

It was encouraging that national politicians took heed of the representations made by myself and other council leaders across the country and that this year there was better news at an early stage – allowing for more effective planning and budget development and avoiding last minute, potentially drastic action in response to a significantly changed settlement.

As outlined at our budget meeting on 21st February, though, the situation for local authorities in Scotland is stark over the coming years as, increasingly, we have the financial resources and capability to focus only on our statutory and core business, and must make savings in all other areas.

15. VISIT TO MID ARGYLL COMMUNITY HOSPITAL AND INTEGRATED CARE CENTRE (MACHICC), LOCHGILPHEAD – 16th January 2019

15.1 Following my appointment to the Integration Joint Board last year, I thought it would be helpful to see first-hand and where possible front line service delivery in action. It was therefore helpful to have an opportunity for a visit to MACHICC in January this year, both to meet with Health and Social Care Partnership senior leaders and to see the community hospital and integrated care centre.

MACHICC is impressive from first sight and it is easy to see why it won architectural awards when first designed and built. I know that the design was created very much in partnership, crucially, with local staff and service users. It lends itself very well to integrated health and social care services, bringing together out and in-patient services, A&E, mental health and much more.

I was particularly impressed by the dedication and professionalism of the front line staff I met there – who all, like council staff, are delivering crucial services in very challenging circumstances, but who are utterly committed to doing the very best that they can for the people who depend on them.

I hope to be able to visit service facilities in other areas in due course.

16. JOINT LEADERSHIP MEETING – NHS HIGHLAND, ARGYLL AND BUTE HSCP – 23rd January and 3rd April 2019

16.1 Members will recall from my last report a note about the introduction of this Joint Leadership quarterly meeting, bringing together the senior management and leadership from NHS Highland, the council and the Health and Social Care Partnership, to strengthen partnership working as we drive forward improvement in integrated health and social care services.

Since then, the first and second sessions for 2019 have taken place on 23rd January and 3rd April respectively.

Inevitably the focus for our January meeting was the forthcoming council and HSCP budget meetings, with financial updates dominating our discussions.

By the time we met on 3rd April, both organisations had set budgets, allowing for a focus on other ways of enhancing how we can work together. Communications professionals from the council and the partnership joined us to discuss the Partnership's Communications and Engagement Frameworks and how they are building up even more ways of working

together and working differently to reflect the Partnership's evolution. We also had an update on the self-assessment currently in progress in response to the recent Ministerial Strategic Group national report on the health and social care integration review of progress. Also on the agenda was the ongoing review of the scheme of integration and this will be a priority at the next meeting in June.

This meeting was also attended by Professor Boyd Robertson, the interim Chair of NHS Highland Board, and we had an opportunity to catch up informally after the Joint Leadership session.

17. COSLA LEADERS, 25th January 2019

17.1 I attended COSLA Leaders on 25th January where the following items were discussed:

- Draft COSLA Submission on the Local Governance Review
- Spending Review update
- Local Government Pay Negotiations
- Update on exiting the European Union
- Children and Young People's Mental Health Taskforce
- CELCIS (Centre for Excellence for Looked-after Children) Protecting Children Programme
- Health and Social Care Integration Review of Progress

All items were heard in private session but if you wish to see any reports or associated briefings, this can be arranged through Leadership Support.

18. INTEGRATION JOINT BOARD MEETINGS, NOVEMBER 2018 TO MARCH 2019

18.1 As one of the council's four representatives on the Integration Joint Board I have attended the Board meetings on 28th November 2018, 30th January and 27th March, with associated board development sessions on both dates as well as a dedicated session focusing on finance on 14th March.

While this period has been dominated by finance and budget – with the Board setting a balanced budget in March – there have been a number of other significant areas of focus, including:

- Improvement Plan progress updates
- Vision for Mental Health Services in Argyll and Bute
- Public Health Annual Report
- Argyll and Bute Alcohol and Drugs Partnership
- Carers Strategy
- Governance matters

- Draft Asset Management Strategy
- HSCP Strategic Plan 2019/20 to 2021/22
- Ministerial Reform of Health and Social Care Integration Progress
- Workforce planning
- Values and culture
- Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)
- Communications and Engagement

19. HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS LEADERS GROUP, 21ST February 2019

19.1 After the council's budget meeting on 21st February, I travelled to Edinburgh to meet with the Leaders and Chief Executives of the other Highlands and Islands councils ahead of COSLA Leaders the next day.

The agenda featured a number of items relating to exiting the European Union and the particular impact on the Highlands and Islands region. Officers from Argyll and Bute Council contributed reports on this and on other key agenda issues including the National Transport Strategy and the Biodegradable Municipal Waste (BMW) ban.

The group agreed a number of actions:

- Asking the Highlands and Islands European Partnership to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Fair Work in relation to uncommitted European funding allocated to the Highlands and Islands
- Argyll and Bute Council to lead on a research brief on identifying distribution criteria for funding, as part of work on an evidence base to support a regional policy position
- Working with COSLA lead officers in relation to migration and the need for a regional policy relating to the H&I region's specific sectoral and geographical challenges
- Argyll and Bute and Western Isles councils to work together on a draft letter to the Minister for Islands on the BMW ban, approach to an Islands Impact Assessment on this and a formal response on the matters of funding and/or derogations for rural and island areas

The group's next meeting is scheduled for 25th April and I will update in the Leader's Report to council in June.

20. COSLA LEADERS, 22nd February 2019

20.1 The day after our budget meeting saw me in Edinburgh once again for the COSLA Leaders meeting, where the following matters were considered:

- Post EU Exit Immigration System
- Improving the lives of Scotland's Gypsy Travellers – guest speakers from the community
- Planning (Scotland) Bill
- Distribution
- Local Government Settlement
- General EU Exit update
- National Care Home Contract

Reports and briefings can be obtained through Leadership Support.

21. ARGYLL AND BUTE COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP FULL PARTNERSHIP, QUEEN'S HALL, DUNOON – 28th March 2019

21.1 I've now attended a range of different events in the newly refurbished Queen's Hall in Dunoon, from concerts to corporate sessions, and it never fails to impress – it really is a fantastic multi-purpose venue. With different organisations using the new spaces it provides, it was also an ideal location for the 2019 CPP Full Partnership meeting with the theme *Community Planning in Action: Meeting Challenges Together*.

As always this was a useful opportunity to reflect on our challenges and successes over the past year of working together, and also to bring that reflection into a look ahead at how we can build on it for the future. As a partnership we never rest on our laurels or take for granted our good track record in partnership working – we are always seeking to enhance and improve. This session was no different and we started off with an inspiring opening session with young people from Dunoon Grammar School who gave us their perspective on their local community.

As well as a look at some specific case studies and success stories, we had sessions on fairness and equalities, engagement and participation and our economic strategy before closing with another look as a partnership at the latest position on exiting the European Union.

22. COSLA CONVENTION AND SPECIAL LEADERS, 29th March 2019

22.1 It was back to the east coast for the COSLA Convention and Special Leaders meeting on 29th March, this time hosted in Musselburgh by East Lothian Council. Reports and briefings can be obtained through Leadership Support.

Convention agenda:

- National Performance Framework
- COSLA Annual Progress Update
- COSLA Strategic Review Follow-up
- COSLA Budget 2019/20 and 2020/21
- Local Governance Review
- UK Exit from EU update
- COSLA Governance appointments

Leaders agenda:

- Local Government Pay Negotiations update
- Scottish Welfare Fund
- Strategic Options Appraisal: Improvement Service and COSLA

23. POLICY LEAD FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

23.1 **Rural Growth Deal:** EDST staff have undertaken business case training to allow them to undertake green book business cases. We are intending to undertake a couple of trials to ensure that staff retain this knowledge as we move forward.

Officers are currently arranging site visits for Scottish Government and UK Government officials to familiarise themselves with aspects of our deal. Staff are working up different visit packages for officials to choose from, and if successful will look to develop others for future visits.

The following studies are ongoing associated with the deal.

- Scottish Enterprise – economic study looking at supply chain and workforce planning for the maritime Change programme. This study is being undertaken by EKOS and has involved workshops and individual surveys with private businesses and MoD. All costs being met by Scottish Enterprise.
- Seaweed feasibility Study being undertaken by SAMs paid for by EMFF. Progressing well.
- Seawater pipeline engineering study has been completed. All feasible but costs are high. HIE are now taking forward an economic impact study on the findings of the report which we will part fund.

- Two housing studies are ongoing in Islay and Mull on the need for key worker housing to facilitate economic growth.
- Hi Trans - Tender to be issued in March following getting £50k from the Local Rail Development Fund looking at rail connectivity in Helensburgh.

23.2 National Transport Strategy 2/Strategic Transport Projects: This is a key update to transport policy in Scotland where the council has the opportunity to lobby the Scottish Government for increased investment in the region's strategic transport infrastructure and services. The STPR in particular will set out the Scottish Government's transport investment priorities over the next 20 years and it is essential that Argyll and Bute's key transport arteries receive appropriate investment as part of this process.

Transport Scotland have written to the Council proposing the establishment of a Regional Transport Working Group for Argyll to ensure greater collaboration in this process. Officers believe the fact that Argyll and Bute, in its own entity, has been identified as a Regional Working Group, is a significant opportunity to work in partnership with our partner stakeholders and Transport Scotland, on the region's priority transport interests. Transport projects also form a significant element of the Rural Growth Deal and due to their nature and scale, they would need to be recognised within the horizon of the National Transport Strategy/Strategic Transport Projects Review in order for them to be realised.

This is seen as an excellent opportunity for Argyll and Bute Council and its stakeholders, to work with Transport Scotland to make real and significant contribution to the forthcoming National Transport Strategy/Strategic Transport Review whilst also taking cognisance of Argyll and Bute Council's Rural Growth Deal.

The Strategic Transportation Team are currently liaising with key stakeholders and local businesses to compile a portfolio of evidence in support of priority transport interventions that the council will lobby the Scottish Government to include as part of the revised STPR. Transport Scotland and their associated consultants will be presenting to local elected members at a seminar on 17th June 2019.

23.3 Fair Start Scotland Contract: To date 42 participants have started the Fair Start Scotland service (ten Helensburgh, 19 Campbeltown, five Rothesay, four Dunoon and four Oban).

Weekly conference calls are being carried out between the PeoplePlus Regional Manager and Employability Contract Managers.

Monthly contract reviews are taking place between the PeoplePlus Regional Manager, Economic Growth Manager and Employability Contract Managers.

Participation on Fair Start Scotland is voluntary therefore we must actively market this service to raise awareness and increase referrals. In order to highlight the service available and inspire participation, Fair Start Scotland is being promoted across Argyll and Bute as follows:

- Continued liaison with local Jobcentreplus staff.
- Engagement by Employability Team staff with Third Party Referral organisations.
- Distribution of posters, leaflets and pop-up stands throughout the area.
- Via social media posts on Facebook and twitter which link directly to an article on the council's webpage.
- EDST Transformation Summer newsletter.
- Presentations at appropriate meetings with appropriate groups.
- FSS poster advertised on community monitors with other options being explored
- Promotion within Live Argyll premises and supermarkets; issuing of leaflets and encouraging participants to sign up to the service.
- Fair Start Scotland flyer distributed to all households in Argyll and Bute along with 19/20 annual Council Tax bill.

We have successfully moved five participants into employment (two Campbeltown, two Helensburgh, one Dunoon). Unfortunately two participants have since fallen out of work. However, we continue to provide support to them with the view to moving into subsequent employment. Three participants have exited the service early due to personal circumstances/failure to engage.

23.4 Regeneration: As I was completing this report we received the fantastic news that Lochgilphead will benefit from a £1m funding boost from Historic Environment Scotland (HES). The grant of £969,700 is through the Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS). Similar CARS projects have already brought improvements to Campbeltown, Dunoon, Inveraray and Rothesay. The Lochgilphead CARS scheme is backed with £386,000 council funding and around £250,000 of building owner contributions – along with the HES grant this takes the projected investment in Lochgilphead to around £1.6m over the five-year CARS scheme.

Competition for CARS funding is always fierce so it is a real achievement to have secured this for Lochgilphead and the wider Mid Argyll area – as well as a significant boost to our ongoing drive to attract more people to live, work and do business in Argyll and Bute.

This followed the announcement of a £1.5m investment in Lochgilphead's Front Green project to deliver improvements to the town's green and Colchester Square.

Meanwhile the Helensburgh CARS bid is due to be decided in 12 months' time – allowing us to fully ensure all criteria is met.

- 23.5 Digital:** The latest take up figure for Argyll and Bute shows that around 53% of premises have taken a fibre based service where it is available meaning almost half haven't actually taken the service up where it is available - this is likely to be either because ADSL is enough for their needs (premises closer to the exchanges could already be getting over 10 Mbps through an ADSL service), they aren't aware that they can get a better service or they don't want to pay for a better service.

91.4% of Argyll and Bute premises are now connected to the fibre network and 82.41% can access speeds greater than 30Mbps.

Work is continuing with regards to a potential DCMS Rural Gigabit Networks application. The initial scope includes premises in Mull/Iona, Gigha/Tayinloan, Lismore/Port Appin, Colonsay, Easdale, Luing, Coll, Carradale, Skipness and Glendaruel. Cross departmental working with Roads and Planning will be an important aspect to ensure smooth programme implementation and minimise associated risks.

- 23.6 Argyll and Bute Employability Partnership Meeting, 12th December 2018:** I had the opportunity to attend the ABEP meeting in Lochgilphead on 12th December 2018 where the following matters featured on the agenda:

- Partnering Agreement and Employability Review – Scottish Government
- Fair Start Scotland update
- Fair Start Scotland marketing within Argyll and Bute
- Tourism and Food and Drink Industries Workforce Survey

- 23.7 COSLA ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY BOARD, 1st March 2018:** This COSLA Strategic Board met in Edinburgh on 1st March to discuss the following agenda items:

- Participatory budgeting presentation
- Place Principle
- Update on exit from the European Union
- Planning (Scotland) Bill
- Regional Transport Working Groups
- Ban on Biodegradable Municipal Waste to Landfill
- Restricted Roads (20mph) (Scotland) Bill

- Additional development session on Regional Approaches to Maximising Inclusive Economic Growth

Reports and briefings are available through Leadership Support.

24. CONCLUSION

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

Councillor Aileen Morton

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

5th April 2019

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

Attached:

Appendix 1 – Update on Priorities of the Life of the Council