

28th November 2019

POLICY LEADS REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report provides members with an update on key areas of activity for Policy Lead Councillors. This aims to provide updates on Policy Lead activity 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 26th September 2019; this report covers the period from that date until 15th November 2019.

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 from September to November 2019.
- 3.2 **Financial Services update:**
Strategic Finance: The department continues to develop models (best, worst and mid-range) in terms of next year's budget. Council had previously agreed to endorse the management and operational savings which will be now actioned; to consult on the policy savings, and to change the budget date to 27th February 2020. We had anticipated a Scottish Budget announcement in mid-December, but that may slip slightly with the announcement of a UK general election. Our S95 officer continues to monitor the overall council outturn forecast for 19/20, and the impact any HSCP forecast deficit may have on the council's financial position.

Local Tax Collections: Council tax collections for 2019/20 as at the end of October are 66.81%, up 0.12% on the previous year at this time. This is positive as we have been slightly down on our collections for the majority of the year to the end of September. The reason for the change is due to some big single account recoveries for circa £80,000 that we have made in collaboration with sheriff officers in our joint working project. In terms of the overall projected council tax outturn for 19/20, this year we may see a small shortfall arising from lower buoyancy growth than previously forecast. Non-domestic rates (NDR) collections for 2019/20 at end of October were 75.02%, up 0.25% on previous year at this time. Collections for 2018/19 as at the end of October are 98.92%, up 0.12% on the previous year at this time. Collections are good and have been bolstered in October by a large payment received from a debtor with a significant level of arrears.

Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF): The programme funding for 2019/20 is £438,740 which reflects a very small increase from the previous year. As at the end of October, we have spent £250,466 on applications received which was 97.9% of the profiled amount. There were 20 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.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) and benefit cap: The total funding for DHPs for 2019/2020 is £651,829 including the tranche 2 funding received in August 2019 which relates to 2018/2019 expenditure. The Strategic Management Team has agreed to support the same priority cases in 2019/20 as we have done throughout 2018/19. At the end of October we have spent or committed £643,619 which is slightly below the funds currently available.

Benefits processing: Our statistics for processing changes in circumstances now show that we have taken on average 5.81 days, just below our target of 6 days. In contrast, for new claims processing we took an average of 22.55 days for the year to date to end of October which is above the target of 21 days.

Transient Visitor Tax Consultation: The Scottish Government has issued a consultation on their proposals to give local authorities the discretion to levy a transient visitor tax in their area. There is a commitment from the Scottish Government to introduce the legislation this parliamentary term. Local authorities would then consider if a transient visitor tax is conducive and within the sustainable tourism interests of their geographic region where a levy might be applied. Economic Development have drafted a response for consideration and approval by the council.

Non-Domestic Rates Barclay Review: There are some significant changes that will be implemented this year as part of the implementation of recommendations made by the Barclay Review of NDR in 2017. The first is that there will be a standardised NDR bill across Scotland therefore each local authority will have the same standard information on their bills from 1st April 2020. In addition NDR will be charged in 10 instalments next year just like the standard Council Tax charges as opposed to the current procedure which is two instalments per annum. There is a requirement for every local authority to put the details of businesses who are in receipt of NDR relief on their website by the start of the new financial year.

3.3 Capital Regeneration:

Helensburgh Waterfront Development: The project's development has been proceeding on the basis of the key milestones approved by members in June 2018 with the approval of the Stage 3 End Stage Report. Following the launch of the new Procurement Exercise (ProcEX-2), the Contract Notice for ProcEX-2 was published on OJEU on 27th July 2019. The revised milestone programme for the project is:

- Invitation to Tender Stage (ITT) tender documents issued to shortlisted suppliers 6th December 2019
- Deadline for ITT Submissions 22nd January 2020
- Plan to bring paper to the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee scheduled meeting on 19th March 2020 and take a paper to a special meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee and then a special council meeting for approval of the Full Business Case and Contract Award Recommendation on 26th March 2020.
- Contract Award Issue – 10th April 2020
- Contractors Mobilisation Period – 15th - 28th April 2020

Rothesay Pavilion: As previously advised the completion date for the construction works has been impacted by a number of issues, most significantly the requirement to remove additional asbestos from the main hall ceiling, and the subsequent requirement to design a sympathetic replacement.

The Project Team has recently concluded their assessment of the programme impact of these works and the Practical Completion date has been confirmed as February 2020.

The asbestos removal works were completed to the agreed programme, which has enabled the internal fit-out (Lighting and Decoration) in and around the Main Hall to recommence. Additionally we are now in a position to bring in a specialist consultant to survey the condition of the timber sprung floor in the main hall, and to advise the contractor and us as to the safest method of undertaking its refurbishment.

The Project Team is currently assessing the financial impact of the extension to the construction programme. Once this assessment has concluded, and the contractual negotiations between the parties are complete, a detailed report will be brought to the relevant committees of the council. The management arrangements and revenue consequences for operating the Pavilion will be subject to a separate report.

3.4 Major Projects Update:

Biodegradable Municipal Waste Ban: Members will be aware of the challenge facing local councils in relation to the ban on biodegradable municipal waste. There has recently been significant change in the Scottish Government's position on the BMW ban. The ban was due to come into full force on 1st January 2021; it has now been delayed until 1st January 2025. The reasons for the delay given by the Cabinet Secretary were focused on the predicted deficit in national Energy from Waste recovery capacity and the extreme unlikelihood of compliance by 2021 by nine authorities.

The Cabinet Secretary made it clear that she is dissatisfied with what she views as a lack of progress on the part of local authorities and that with the new deadline she is expecting authorities to "move at pace" to comply with the ban ahead of the 2025 date. To encourage local authorities to meet early compliance, the Scottish Government will increase the landfill tax. To date we have not been given any indication on the likely scale of the increase in the tax rate. The Cabinet Secretary also indicated that a new Programme Board is to be established to assist authorities in making the transition to compliance.

Argyll and Bute's position is that we are supportive of the delay till 2025 but the delay does not address the critical issues that lie at the heart of our difficulties in compliance all of which increase the costs of compliance beyond our ability to afford it;

- The delay only reduces the burden of additional cost relating to the PPP and does not remove it entirely it,
- Poor access to market, the cost implication of having to transport waste across large distances for recovery via 'energy from waste' plants (EfW),
- EfW Gate fees that are well above landfill costs,
- A rise in the landfill tax rate will not encourage us to comply but it will squeeze our revenue budget making compliance more challenging,
- Effects on the increase volume of haulage on ferry and road infrastructure/capacity.

In response to the changed date to 2025, officers have requested meetings with Scottish Government officials to look at the unique challenges faced by Argyll and Bute. Officers are preparing revised

models to demonstrate the opportunity cost of continued support for the PPP contract. Officers have also been working closely with colleagues in West Dunbartonshire, Inverclyde, South Ayrshire, and East Ayrshire to explore the possibility of a joint solution which could either be a procured service solution or an investment solution that would deliver access to an EfW at a greatly reduced rate.

Craignure Pier: Following the completion of the Scottish Transport Analysis Guide (STAG), an outline business case (OBC) in line with Scottish Government requirements has been commissioned for the temporary works (these works potentially run to several million pounds and involve complex marine structures to effectively extend the pier to accommodate larger vessels). This OBC is quite a detailed process and will provide an analysis of the possible 'temporary' works on environmental, safety, accessibility, financial grounds etc. The OBC is due to be completed in February. A further OBC is being progressed for the longer term permanent works.

Meetings with community representatives via the established Craignure Marine Infrastructure Liaison Group (SMILG) continue and are going generally well. However, we continue to receive additional representation from individuals who suggest that the progress of this project should be accelerated.

- 3.5 Depute Leader update:** I continue to meet regularly with the Leader, the Chief Executive and other officers in terms of this role, covering a wide range of subjects. In addition to various council meetings, I am also a member of the HSCP's Integrated Joint Board and member of its Finance and Policy Committee, which is currently meeting on a monthly basis.

4. POLICY LEAD FOR SUPPORT SERVICES – Councillor Rory Colville

- 4.1** As agreed at council on 26th September, some Policy Lead remits were changed slightly in light of changes to the council's management structure. This is the first report under my new role of Policy Lead for Support Services.

4.2 Legal and Regulatory Support:

Governance: It has been agreed that Legal and Regulatory Support will provide committee support to the Integration Joint Board to support both governance around their meeting process and the production of timely papers and agendas. The full service will commence from 1 April 2020. In the interim a limited service, while processes and staff are organised for the full provision, will be provided. Committee staff are already engaged with IJB staff to ensure they are prepared with a full committee schedule

for the production of pre agenda and full committee briefings and the issue of related papers.

Lieutenancy of Argyll and Bute: The council is now acting as Clerk to the Lord Lieutenant, with Douglas Hendry as the nominated Clerk of Lieutenancy. The Clerk is responsible for providing appropriate support to the role of HM Lord- Lieutenant in person and through the Lieutenancy Office. Day-to day administrative support to the Lord-Lieutenant and the Lieutenancy in undertaking duties associated with the lieutenancy role will be undertaken by staff within the council's Legal and Regulatory Support service.

Elections and Electoral Matters:

Three community councils (Tiree, Hunter's Quay and Colintraive and Glendaruel) had elections on 24th October, with a total of six nominations meaning that all were elected uncontested.

2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements – The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland is undertaking a review of the six council areas which contain inhabited islands as soon as practicable in terms of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018.

The Commission plans to commence reviews of Argyll and Bute, Highland and North Ayrshire council areas later this year with the aim that the reviews will be completed in time for the 2022 local government elections.

Before the review commences, they met with the Council Leader, Chief Executive, Executive Director – Customer Services, Head of Financial Services and Head of Legal and Regulatory Support to have a preliminary discussion on their approach and any initial thoughts the Council may have.

Issues for consideration in the review include: Councillor numbers, use of the power to create wards of between 1 and 4 members where these contain inhabited islands, how they define islands communities, any other ward design considerations, electorate forecasts and effective consultation arrangements.

Preparatory work for the General Election 2019 is underway. The Election team are fully engaged in preparations for the 12th December poll. The Notice of Election was published on Friday 8th November and arrangements for booking of staff and polling stations, transport arrangements including special arrangements for helicopters and ferries to transport ballot boxes are well in hand. The council will commence the count as soon as possible after close of poll and no later than four hours

after the close. Contingency arrangements are in hand given the potential risks associated with a winter election.

Procurement and Contract Management: Local suppliers across Argyll and Bute are being offered free training and advice on how they can improve their chances of winning council tenders by our Council's Procurement and Contract Management Team.

A number of informative training events and roadshows have been organised during October and November as part of the Supplier Development Programme (SDP), of which we are members and which enables all our local suppliers to register free of charge with the programme to access free advice, assistance and training on public procurement.

The first event was an online 'Talking Tenders' webinar on 28 October. This enabled suppliers to discuss internal processes and upcoming tender opportunities from the comfort of their own desk.

A number of 'Meet the Buyer' roadshows are scheduled to take place in Oban, Helensburgh, Lochgilphead, Campbeltown and Dunoon in November. To date we have had events in Oban, Helensburgh and Lochgilphead. Our Business Gateway colleagues are also in attendance with the Procurement Team staff to offer any business support to the suppliers. These roadshows are a great way for businesses to find out more about providing services and supplies for the public sector in Argyll and Bute.

Getting the highest possible score in a bid is essential to winning a contract, but it can be difficult to know what exactly is required. Therefore, to aid local businesses, two workshops have been arranged in Lochgilphead to provide an insight into our council's needs and expectations. The first event was due to take place on 27th November with a focus on improving bid scores. Key topics including bid writing and pricing skills. The second workshop, 'Tender Procedures and the ESDP' will be held on 11th December and is an intermediate-level workshop covering the various types of tender procedures in detail, including processes and timescales. It will also look at the selection stage and completing the European Single Procurement Document (ESPD).

Food Banks: Work continues to support the food banks in operation across the area. For example, staff and pupils at Lochgilphead Joint Campus came up with the novel idea of growing pumpkins at the school and then invited staff to pay to carve them. All proceeds from the

Halloween fundraising efforts was used to purchase food from the local supermarket, which was then delivered to the council's food bank collection point in Kilmory for distribution.

4.3 Community Planning:

Community Planning and Development Engagement: The consultation titled "How Good is Your Place?" closed on the 31st October, attracting 1548 responses from 87 communities across Argyll and Bute. We are very grateful to all those who took time to fill in the online survey or take part in our local engagement events. The results are currently being processed by the team, and will inform the next versions of the Area Community Planning Action Plans (due in 2021). Results from the engagement should be available from February and will also be made available to communities and partners for use in any projects or plans they may be developing.

Supporting Communities Fund: The Supporting Communities Fund Grant is now open for applications from community groups with a deadline of 6th December 2019. Application forms are available online. Paper copies are also available as are large print format copies, in accordance with the team's equality and diversity guidelines for documentation.

There has already been some promotion to all community councils, development trusts and my third sector mailing list, as well as posts from the Council's Facebook page, however I know that members' influence is considerable and that your engagement with communities is wide ranging and will help to raise awareness of this fund and ensure that all groups have the opportunity to apply.

4.4 Customer Services:

Customer Service Centre: Contacts to the Customer Service channels were up by 300 for September 2019 compared to the same month last year at 14,817, which is against the general downward trend for agent mediated contacts. However September and October mark the transition from paperless calendars and so there have been more contacts from customers requesting a printed calendar or information on digital alternative. The table below summarises the calendar related contacts but it is important to note that 95% of customers are using the various digital alternatives (yellow highlight):

Contact Medium	14-20 th Sept	21-27 Sept	28/9 – 4/10	5/10-11/10	12/10-18/10	TOTAL
Web Page Views	10946	12,838	17,166	12,096	10,300	63,346
Web Calendar Downloads	4524	7216	9193	6019	4071	31023
iCal Calendar downloads	0	0	151	315	251	717
Total CSC/CSP Enquiries	400	407	479	426	316	2028
Directed to online etc	47	27	37	33	24	168
Calendar Reqs to back office	314	231	273	209	142	1169
Printed Calendars at CSPs	39	149	169	184	150	691
TOTAL	15870	20461	26989	18856	14938	97114

The voice automated Bin Day Hotline went live w/c 4th November.

Despite higher call volumes the call abandon rate target for September was still comfortably met at 3.1% Vs target of 6.5%, as was the average call duration target.

A full review of winter maintenance contact handling processes and systems was held with Roads colleagues and the website pages, forms and information for CSC/CSP Agents has been updated ready for the season. Christmas shutdown preparations are also well advanced.

Although there has been an increase in demand for assistance with the EU Verification Scheme element of the EU Settlement Scheme, this is still manageable and being offered at Helensburgh and Oban CSPs: so far 91 customers have used the service.

Registration: Activity is down for FQ2 compared to the same quarter last year due to fewer Births, deaths and marriages:

	Births	Deaths	Religious marriage	Civil Marriage	Total Regist.	Total Ceremonies
2018/19	493	870	462	395	2222	408
2019/20	460	792	433	383	2074	383
Variance	-33	-78	-29	-12	-148	-25

ICT: Engineers are currently working in the Helensburgh data centre installing all of the new servers and storage. This major project is on track and with the technology in both data centres refreshed, we expect to benefit from faster disaster or system failure recovery times. The

replacement of the servers has significantly reduced the number of ICT red risk assets – at least for this coming year.

The average time to fix for Q2 is 3.2 hours and is well below the target of 5 hours. Application downtime at 0.06% and unscheduled infrastructure downtime at 0.17% for the quarter are both well below targets.

The council has passed the Cyber Essentials Plus security standard for the second year running – one of only a handful of Scottish councils to do so. Our annual Public Service Network Health Check has also just finished with the assessors commenting on our ICT security and patching setup – describing it as one of the best in the UK.

Our extensive SharePoint environment has been successfully upgraded from SharePoint 2010 to 2016 and we are now working on the secure publication of SharePoint sites for access by external partners. This will improve our ability to share information with auditors, the HSCP, and other external agencies.

4.5 HR:

Living Wage: An agreement was made between CoSLA and Scottish Joint Trades Unions to consolidate the Scottish Local Government (SLG) Living Wage into council pay scales by 2021. Argyll and Bute Council currently pay a supplement to top up the pay of employees if their hourly rate falls beneath the SLG Living Wage and so a project has been established to investigate cost effective ways to implement the consolidation and prepare proposals for council to consider.

In addition to this, the proposals also include a review of the current employment deal. The employment deal which covers salary, employment contract, conditions of service, training and learning opportunities, employee benefits and working arrangements has been in place since 2008 and there have been a number of significant changes within the council since then.

The proposals are currently being finalised and costed and will be presented to the Policy and Resources Committee in February 2020.

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

5.1 Local Meetings:

At the IJB meeting on 25th September agenda items included the 'Culture Fit for the Future' update from NHS Highland, in response to the Sturrock Report, and a substantial review of governance structures. The latter has strengthened accountability around finances with the replacement of the Quality and Finance Board with a Finance and Policy Committee. Also on the agenda at the IJB was the publication of the Living Well Strategy and updates on engagement and communication and the Primary Care Improvement Plan. There was an additional development session on 15th October which has been part of an effort to achieve greater involvement from all IJB members in areas such as financial planning.

I also participated in a number of committees and boards associated with the IJB – the Clinical and Care Governance Committee on 5th September, Quality and Finance Board on 10th September, Finance and Policy Committee on 29th October, the Joint Leadership Meeting on 31st October and the Strategic Planning Group on 31st October.

Myself and a number of HSCP officers attended a meeting in Dunoon on 4th October organised by Michael Russell MSP to present the findings of a survey of mental health services in Argyll and Bute. Present was Jeane Freeman, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport, and a number of local people with personal and professional experience of mental health. I appreciate the work in collating the information gathered from the survey which I hope will help improve services locally.

5.2 National Meetings:

COSLA Health and Social Care Board met on 13th September and 1st November. Agenda items have included the establishment of Public Health Scotland, Children and Young People's Mental Health, the Integrated National Health and Social Care Workforce Plan, and Living Wage and Fair Work in Adult Social Care.

As a member of the national IJB Chairs and Vice-Chairs Executive I have been at meetings in Edinburgh on 1st November and with representatives of Chairs of Health Boards on 4th November. Topics discussed included training of IJB members, resources to support development of IJBs nationally, and how to improve accountability of IJBs.

I also attended a national Community Justice Event in Glasgow on 23rd September. This highlighted a number of challenges facing the justice system currently such as rising numbers of people in prison, public perception of the service and links to the wider public health agenda in particular around drug deaths.

5.3 Visits:

Intergenerational Learning is something which has attracted much publicity in recent years and on 18th June I visited Ashgrove Care Home in Dunoon to help celebrate the 2nd anniversary of their ongoing project with Patchwork Nursery Early Learning Childcare.

One consequence of co-location are plans to change how buildings are used, and I felt it important to visit the Lorne Resource Centre and Lynnside on 6th August, where proposals have been put forward by the HSCP that would see the area occupied by the centres within the social work building reduced.

For over a decade now there has been a focus across Scotland on shifting the balance of care from acute to community settings, and a vital part of that is ensuring that people are able to be advised on the adaptations necessary for care to be provided at home and for these to be installed and maintained. Argyll and Bute Care and Repair is one of the key partners in this work locally and I was invited to attend their board on 27th August where I was able to understand further what they do as well as the challenges faced in providing these services.

5.4 Adult Services:

Within the Rothesay Victoria Hospital on Bute work to create a dialysis unit began on 7th October. The nursing posts have been successfully recruited to with the two staff members commencing their training in December. The aim is for a handover to be achieved early next year. The hospital is also currently receiving an update to the mortuary facilities.

Cowal Hospital continues to operate with one inpatient ward. A series of meetings and engagement events will be scheduled in order to inform a final decision on bed numbers.

Conversation Cafes have been planned in Bute and Cowal on the theme of 'Our Hospital'. Tying in to this Cowal are currently running a social media campaign to highlight services offered within the hospital and Bute intend to follow the same format for theirs. This has attracted the attention of a local radio station who wish to be our partners in positive promotion of 'Our Hospital'.

Following the notification being given of the closure of Inverreck House care home bi-weekly meetings are taking place with local management, Care Inspectorate and the care home managers. Four residents still remain to be placed however of those three have a plan and are awaiting a bed becoming available.

A programme is currently being delivered to staff to support bringing together three geographical Occupational Therapy teams within Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands. Through workshops and confidential 1-to-1 sessions focused on organisational and personal development this aims to create a single team for the area.

Development of mental health services in response to 'Action 15' is being progressed. Following the appointment of an urgent/crisis care team lead and three additional band 6 staff, recruitment has recently commenced for the urgent and emergency care practitioners. The new team now in place for the primary care mental health stream will improve alignment of services and increase support to GP surgeries.

5.5 Children and Families:

Funding has been secured for a pilot of trauma informed practice, which will raise awareness of trauma and develop trauma informed systems and services.

A Short Life Working Group has been established to progress the Management Service Review. Job descriptions are being prepared for job evaluation.

5.6 Human Resources and Organisational Development (HROD):

In September the HSCP NHS HROD team was integrated and partially co-located with the council HROD team. This combined team is led by Argyll and Bute Council's Head of Customer Support Services and retains professional lead support from the NHS Highland's HR Director.

Change and the implementation of service redesigns is the biggest challenge for the team. This is leading to greater demands for support to managers and employees who are dealing with uncertainty. As future structures are yet to be implemented there are also a high number of temporary working arrangements in place currently.

Meetings between HROD and trades unions have identified issues with the high volume of change in an integrated context. A joint improvement plan has been developed to address these, with progress monitored by HROD and reported to management and the Joint Partnership Forum.

Workforce planning data is being gathered to produce a draft workforce plan for the HSCP meeting revised timelines set by the Scottish Government.

The scope, method and undertaking of the NHS Highland investigation within Argyll and Bute as part of the Sturrock Review recommendations is

being finalised. This will be a priority for the team and will be due to start by January 2020 with an outcome report in March 2020.

5.7 Strategic Planning and Performance:

Expansion of the “Near me” video consultation system continues. Most recently this has included an orthopaedic clinic operating in Campbeltown hospital by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde.

The four new Locality Planning Groups (LPGs) are all now operating and in the process of agreeing local priorities aligned with the strategic plan objectives. The groups are co-terminus with Area Committee and Community Planning partnerships.

The computer network links which enable HSCP staff to access both NHS and Council systems are in place and are allowing the progression of co-location of teams. Areas where work remains to be completed includes access to asset management for the telecare and the council SharePoint site.

Consolidation of the use of CareFirst continues, including a link with NHS hospitals and GP surgeries. This facilitation of information sharing is supporting further development of Electronic Patient Records. Planning of the eventual replacement of the CareFirst system is underway with a project group preparing a business case.

Council fleet vehicles used by the HSCP are already equipped with telematics and this is now being installed into the majority of NHS fleet vehicles. This will improve staff safety, address asset utilisation and reduce costs. The first order for electric vehicles has also now been placed which will reduce CO2 emissions and will be linked into council plans for charging infrastructure.

5.8 Finance:

At the IJB meeting in September a further Financial Recovery Plan was approved to bring the budget for the year back in balance. However there remains a significant risk of an end of year overspend and further work will be required to identify new savings and ensure delivery of those already approved. Without this the forecast overspend for the year is £1.989m across the HSCP with a £1.671m overspend on social care services. The largest area of risk remains the service level agreement with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and negotiations over this remain ongoing the position of the HSCP.

The new Finance and Policy Committee has now met for the first time giving strengthened oversight over finances and will continue to meet monthly until the situation improves. Work is underway to ensure that

proposals for savings and service transformation as part of the 2020/21 quality and finance plan can be made available for appropriate public engagement following the IJB meeting in January 2020.

6. POLICY LEAD FOR HOUSING, ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES – Councillor Robin Currie

6.1 Introduction: My remit has changed following the council meeting on 26th September and now includes Roads and Infrastructure Services. I continue to chair the Argyll Islands Sounding Board and maintain oversight over Gaelic activities. Since my last report of September 2019 I have continued my Policy Lead meetings with officers on a regular basis. I have attended COSLA meetings and continue to chair meetings of the Financial Inclusion and Advice Group which was set up by the Council after taking over from the Welfare Rights Group.

6.2 Roads and Infrastructure Services:

Winter Maintenance: Winter maintenance arrangements are now in full force with the recent cold temperatures. Gritter drivers have been out treating the network through the night to ensure our roads are safe for the travelling public. The Winter Maintenance Policy was considered by the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee in September 2019.

Contained within that report are proposals for community resilience for future winters. As an initial step we aim to better engage with our local communities and involve them in our winter maintenance programme. Where possible, this will involve empowering communities to work with the Council during winter weather events.

During the first week in November the council took delivery of 17 new state of the art vehicles to augment its winter maintenance fleet. This means that there are now 32 front line vehicles ready for action as well as two spares in case of breakdown and a further six vehicles (as well as tractors and V-ploughs) which can be used as required. Our roads team use these vehicles to make around 750 miles of local roads safe for everyone to use.

One gritter in each of the four administrative areas will be named by local primary school children who have been taking part in a competition. The winners will see their chosen names on a plate on the side of one of the gritters in their area.

Capital Programme: The Roads Reconstruction programme is progressing well and largely complete. This year's capital funding has delivered various scheme across the area to the value of £6.222M with an additional

£1.7M of STTS funding supplementing this. Detailed information on individual schemes and their status can be viewed on our website at the following link: <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/roads-capital-programme>

Deposit Return Scheme: The Scottish Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) is due to be implemented across all of Scotland from 1st April 2021. The scheme is designed to increase national recycling rates by applying a 20p per unit deposit on each container sold. The aim is to encourage people to return the product to be reimbursed for the deposit. The materials covered by the scheme are PET plastic (drinks bottles but not plastic milk bottles), aluminium, steel and glass beverage containers.

Marine Projects: A complete review has been carried out on all Council link-spans at Dunoon, Rothesay, Campbeltown, Port Askaig and Craignure. This has taken the form of on-site inspections, reviews of maintenance records – both specialist and on-site maintenance – along with a complete review of extant link-span maintenance contracts. Recommendations were made to extend one of two existing contracts for a finite period with a view to re-tendering link-span maintenance in the near future.

Following initial surveys and recommendations, our current maintenance contractor has completed their first round of servicing on all link-spans since the contract extension was signed. The opportunity was taken to replace all hydraulic hoses at all 5 link-spans during recent servicing work. Craignure link-span will require replacement of some major parts and work is ongoing to prepare for refurbishment work later this year. Close liaison will take place with Calmac and, of course, the local community before works are carried out.

Customer Care and Communication: The Customer Care Project has recently seen a noticeable improvement in prompt and thorough responses. Proactive briefings to members have been informative and timely, enabling us to pass this information onto our constituents. A report will be considered at the December Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee detailing the recent progress of this project.

Festive lighting: The three year handover period for festive lights to communities has now come to an end with the majority of communities all set for this year's festivities. Some areas are still receiving advice and assistance, however, overall this project has been successfully rolled out.

Integrated Transport: Following the management restructure, the Integrated Transport Team have moved across to Roads and Infrastructure and now sit with the Fleet team. The Integrated Transport

Team manage school transport and public transport services across Argyll and Bute.

Campbeltown Flood Scheme: The Campbeltown Flood Protection Scheme has progressed to scheme confirmation. Preliminary confirmation of the scheme is an initial stage in the scheme obtaining deemed planning permission, and allows the project to proceed toward detailed design with less risk.

6.3 Housing:

I recently attended the Rural and Islands Housing Association Forum Conference in Dumfries and was delighted that Dunbritton Housing Association won the coveted Development of the Year Award. On accepting the award, their Chief Executive, Allan Murphy, made special mention of Argyll and Bute Council for the substantial financial assistance given for the development. The total development costs were £3.8m with £941k coming from the council.



Receiving the award with Allan Murphy, Chief Executive and Sephton MacQuire, Board Member of Dunbritton Housing Association

It was a pleasure to attend the official opening of the 14 new houses at Lochdon on Mull recently. This development has six units for general

needs rent and eight units shared equity. All houses are now occupied except one. This development had a total cost of £2.7m with £168k coming from the council.

Highland and Islands Enterprise along with Argyll and Bute Council held a successful housing and economic development day at Dunbeg on 21st October. The aim of the day was to share knowledge and ideas about how housing can support economic growth in the local authority area. Over 50 delegates were in attendance from a variety of organisations such as Health, the construction industry, local Housing Associations and various community groups. Discussions from the day will feed into the housing element of the Rural Growth Deal.

The Home Energy Efficiency Programme Area Based Scheme continues to deliver good outcomes for households in Argyll and Bute. 43 houses have had energy efficiency measures completed since July 2019. In addition a further 210 households have had grants approved to carry out energy efficiency measures to their homes.

6.4 Gaelic:

The Royal National Mod was held last month in Glasgow and it was a great pleasure to be there at the Official Opening in Glasgow City Chambers Banqueting Hall. Last year it was a great honour for me to open the Royal National Mod in Dunoon and this year the honours were done by Mr John Swinney, Depute First Minister. The Mod had an amazing 3,100 participants and over 8,000 attendees over the course of its eight days. Many individuals, groups and choirs from Argyll and Bute did very well in the competitions and my congratulations to all the children, tutors, teachers, choirs and individuals for doing Argyll and Bute proud. Special mention also to the Oban Choir for winning the coveted Lovat and Tullibardine Trophy.

I was also asked along to the press conference on the last day of the Mod and this was when it was announced that the Royal National Mod would return to Oban in 2023. I spoke at this event and said how happy we all were that the Mod was returning to the town of its birth and a very warm welcome awaited.

7. POLICY LEAD FOR EDUCATION – Councillor Yvonne McNeilly

7.1 UK Award Winners:

I was over the moon when I was told that Dunoon Grammar School were crowned the UK's European Entrepreneurial School of the Year in Helsinki earlier in October. This is another outstanding achievement for the school and could not have been reached without the hard work and commitment shown by pupils and staff, especially Head Teacher David Mitchell, and

Principal Teacher of Business and Computing Paul Gallanagh. Both David and Paul have led our young people to these achievements and to positive destinations in life.

Our young people have been working really hard on a wide variety of initiatives over the last few years and I have been truly amazed by the sheer scale and quality of what they have achieved – they go from strength to strength and are a true credit to Argyll and Bute – I look forward to seeing what this incredible and inspiring school's next venture is.

7.2 Finalists in Quality Improvement Awards:

The Quality Improvement Awards are run by Scottish Government and Healthcare Improvement Scotland. Now in their fourth year, the awards celebrate the brilliant range of quality improvement practice that has been produced across Scotland to make services the very best they possibly can be for babies, children, young people and their families in all aspects of their lives.

The "Quality Improvement Faculty" by the Argyll and Bute Council and NHS Highland was shortlisted for the Achieving Results at Scale Award. In addition the Argyll and Bute GIRFEC/Quality Improvement group won the Team Award for its approach to **Getting It Right For Every Child** I am delighted Argyll and Bute Council were so well represented at these awards and have been recognised for their commitment to embedding quality improvement.

7.3 Scottish Learning Festival:

I was excited to hear that pupils and staff from Dalintober Primary School attended the Scottish Learning Festival in Glasgow in October. The schools attendance followed from an invite from Education Scotland to provide a presentation at the festival on "Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion". Pupils had their own stall at the festival, and showcased their hand grown fruit from the school's allotment. This is another great example of how we are committed to raising attainment, equality and inclusion for all.

7.4 Argyll pupils visit Germany:

Young people from Bute, Campbeltown and Helensburgh have travelled to Amberg-Sulzbach in Bavaria as part of a long running youth exchange programme where they learned first-hand about Germany's culture and traditions.

7.5 Teacher Recruitment:

Across Scotland, local authorities are facing challenging times in recruiting teachers. As we take action to attract more people to live and work in the area, it has been encouraging and positive to read the different stories

published about our teachers – here are a couple of stories which shows the passion and commitment of our teachers.

Carina Taylor returned to Dunoon after working and studying in Glasgow, and now teaches in Kirn Primary. Carina returned to Dunoon to be closer to her family, but to also have that “community feeling” that she missed in Glasgow. *“Anyone thinking about becoming a teacher in Argyll and Bute, I’d say go for it. It really is a wonderful place with wonderful, friendly people.”*

Chris Doxsey relocated to Argyll and Bute when offered a job as PE teacher at Campbeltown Grammar and has been here for 7 years and hasn’t looked back. Peter enjoys his job and tells us that not only do the pupils get to take part in traditional PE classes, they also get the opportunity to participate in a huge variety of outdoor sports that young people in urban areas don’t necessarily get the opportunity to try - *“Being a teacher in Argyll and Bute is great. It’s a fantastic way of life and I would recommend it to anyone.”*

7.6 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Funding: Education Scotland have awarded £100,000 to help deliver inspirational teaching and enhance learning in STEM subjects. Rothesay Joint Campus, Dunoon Grammar School, Port Ellen Primary and Dunoon Digital Hub will benefit from this programme and have plans in place to enhance our young people in their learning journey. I think this is fantastic news as these subjects are a really important part of our everyday lives and will assist our young people in real life.

7.7 Social media: In this day and age, schools are increasingly showcasing their achievements and hard work via social media platforms, and I would encourage everyone who uses social media to follow our school’s social media pages on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram to get a continuous flavor of the hard work and commitment of our teachers and young people.

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

8.1 Reform of Planning Legislation: The Scottish Government have now published their post bill programme for roll out and implementation of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 which can be viewed at the following link:
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/transforming-planning-practice-post-bill-work-programme/>

Officers have identified where changes to the planning act will have direct implications for the Council and a training session for members will be

provided as part of the PPSL regular training programme in advance of the December meeting of the PPSL committee.

8.2 Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2):

As members will be aware at the last Council meeting the proposed LDP2 which became the 'settled view' of the council was approved to proceed to the next stage of the process which is an 8 week public consultation period. The consultation period which gives communities, individuals, developers, key agencies and other stakeholders an opportunity to have their say on the proposed plan commenced on the 14th November 2019 and will run until 12 noon on the 23rd January 2020.

8.3 Conservation Area Appraisals:

At the time of writing this report Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans for Ellenabeich and Easdale Island were due to be considered by the Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee on 20th November 2019 and the committee are due to consider a Conservation Area Appraisal for Lochgilphead at their meeting in either January or February.

8.4 Conservation Area Officer:

Our Conservation Area Officer continues to carry out work for the National Park, providing conservation advice on an ongoing basis an arrangement which brings additional income into the service.

8.5 Building Standards:

Building Standards are continuing to process Building Warrant applications and provide verifier services for Inverclyde, Falkirk, East Lothian and East Dunbartonshire Councils and with this commercialisation work the service remains above budget for this financial year.

Performance on vetting Building Warrant applications continues to remain well above Building Standards 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. On writing this report they are due to be audited for their CSE award on 27th November and I will report the result of the audit at a later date.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1** This report provides members with an update on Policy Lead portfolios. Policy Lead Councillors will be happy to discuss any particular issues with colleagues as required.

Argyll and Bute Council – Policy Lead Councillors Report – 15th November 2019

For further information please contact Aileen McNicol, Leadership Support and Member Services Manager, telephone 01546 604014 or email aileen.mcnicol@argyll-bute.gov.uk