ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL **HELENSBURGH AND LOMOND AREA COMMITTEE**

ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES **25 MARCH 2021**

ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES UPDATE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report provides an update on Roads and Infrastructure Service activities in recent months.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Area Committee consider the contents of this report.

3.0 DETAIL

Response to Covid

3.1 Roads and Infrastructure Services are mostly operating to pre-Covid specification/schedule and timetables taking into account Covid secure measures as appropriate. These measures have recently been revised to take into account the increased transmission rate of the new variant. This lockdown differs somewhat from the previous one and the only notable services which are stood-down are the bulky uplift service, and the access to piers and harbours for leisure craft, other than as ports of safe harbours e.g. emergencies.

3.2 The service continues to focus on key frontline services including winter gritting and snow clearing, refuse collection, maintenance, management and operation of the road, port and ferry networks. There has been a noticeable reduction in vehicular traffic during the current restrictions.

3.3 Wherever possible vehicle occupancy is being restricted to one person per vehicle. There are some exceptions where for operational reasons 2 people are sharing vehicles. In these exceptions Method Statements and risk assessments are in place to provide reasonable mitigations and control measures against the transmission of Covid.

3.4 Regular meetings are taking place with Funeral Directors across the area to

facilitate a constructive dialogue regarding managing the number of mourners attending burials and cremations, and to provide a forum to help to ensure we can take a collaborative approach towards providing a dignified and compassionate service during these unprecedented times while complying with restrictions and limitations.

Capital Roads Reconstruction Programme

3.5 The 2020/21 Capital Programme was delayed until the latter part of July as a result of COVID and was therefore revised with a number of preparatory schemes being carried out which will enable surface dressing to be applied in 2021. This in effect moves us to a two year capital investment programme due to delay in commencing the programme due to Covid restrictions. The total value of works which have been put back to financial year 2021/22 is £2.757M.

3.6 The proposed Capital Roads Reconstruction programme for 2021/22 is being prepared and will be reported to the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee in March 2021. Following this the programme for each of the administrative areas will be forwarded to Area Committee Members and updates provided to Area Committees as the programme progresses. A number of the 2020/21 schemes could not be completed as a result of the construction restrictions imposed during the first lockdown. The majority of these schemes have been slipped into 2021/22 and predominantly include surface dressing where preparatory work has largely been completed in 2021/22. This means that we are effectively delivering a programme over 2 financial years to ensure that we can maximize the whole life benefit of works by patching and preparing in year 1 and surface dressing in year 2.

Bin Collections and Civic Amenity Sites

3.7 In the initial 2020 lockdown bin collections across the whole of Argyll and Bute moved to two weekly collections for both general waste and recycling. This was done for two main reasons, firstly to reduce the number of staff required and secondly to reduce the vehicle trips required. This amended service delivery model provided additional waste capacity but significantly increased the material to landfill whilst reducing the amount of material which was recycled. The majority of Councils across Scotland also varied their waste collections for similar reasons. The Council reverted back to the pre-Covid specification in the summer. As part of the initial lockdown, the civic amenity sites were closed although the various recycling and bring facilities across Argyll and Bute remained open and were serviced throughout this period. On 1st June civic amenity sites were reopened across Scotland in line with advice from Scottish Government. Due to social distancing requirements and anticipated increase in use of the CA sites, detailed traffic management plans were drawn up and implemented for each site across the Council area.

3.8 The Council is currently operating a full kerbside collection service and CA sites remain open. Please note the Council is currently not providing the special uplift service which so far has not proved to be problematic with very few requests for service having been received.

Waste Strategy

3.9 In December 2020, the EDI Committee considered a report providing members with an update on the Biodegradable Municipal Waste ban which comes into place in 2025.

3.10 The Council has now signed up the Household Waste Charter which helps to ensure that the Council is compliant from a recycling and reuse perspective and also provides opportunities to access resources through Zero Waste Scotland, Scottish Government and others. A report on this subject was considered by the December 2020 EDI Committee.

Correspondence and Information

3.11 Officers continue to work on improved communications with Elected Members with topical briefings being distributed to Members and the ongoing monitoring of timeliness and quality of responses. This is an ongoing piece of work where we strive to make continuous improvement.

3.12 A report providing an update on the project to improve correspondence and customer service was considered at the EDI Committee in December 2020.

Winter Update

3.13 Winter maintenance services continue to be delivered in line with the Council's Winter Maintenance Policy. Demands on this part of the services have been significant so far this season with a higher than average number of treatments having been carried out due to the cold conditions we have experienced. Our resilience in terms of salt stocks is good with salt deliveries coming in via Northern Ireland by sea and via road from other suppliers.

Operations Works Programmes

3.14 Whilst works were scaled back significantly during the first lockdown at the start of this financial year, the majority of our cyclic activities have been fully delivered albeit with Covid secure specifications in place to ensure that both the workforce and members of the public remain safe. This means that road inspections, repairs, gully cleansing, ditching etc is being carried out alongside winter maintenance, works to grasslands, cemeteries etc.

Cemetery Consultation

3.15 At the time of writing there is an ongoing cemetery consultation, the results of which will be reported back to the EDI Committee. The purpose of the consultation is to seek community views on potential future cemetery provision across the Council area.

School and Public Transport

3.16 Service buses are generally running with low patronage. Our home to school bus services generally transport around 3000 pupils with many pupils taking up transport during the period from August to December 2020 when schools were open. Plans are in place to transport those children who will be returning to school when they reopen on 22 February this year.

Ports, Harbours and Ferries

3.17 Throughout the pandemic period to date we have been working closely with Transport Scotland, Calmac and CMAL to provide flexibility around the various services that the council supports and/or provides in terms of ferries and other commercial vessels. As a general comment, passengers travelling during the first lockdown were around 90% of the seasonal levels and currently we are finding passenger levels to be around 70% although car decks are regularly reported to be near capacity. This is understood to be a reflection that many businesses continue to operate but foot passengers are largely not travelling.

Traffic Regulation Orders

3.18 At the December 2020 EDI Committee a report was presented to members regarding the TRO Process Review, the significant backlog of (permanent) Traffic Regulation Orders and that these may take a substantial timescale to progress and the impact of Temporary TROs & Notices (statutory function of the Roads Authority) on the ability to progress TROs timeously. A further update will be presented to area committees in June.

4.0 CONCLUSION

4.1 This report gives a general update to local members on activities taken place throughout the current financial year and note some of the significant changes and variations that have taken place due to the ongoing pandemic situation.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Policy – various policies referred to within the body of the report

5.2 Financial – none

5.3 Legal – none known

5.4 HR – none known

5.5 Fairer Scotland Duty: (please refer to guidance on Hub)

5.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics – none known

5.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – none known

5.5.3 Islands – none known

5.6. Risk – none known

5.7 Customer Service - none

Executive Director with responsibility for Roads and Infrastructure Services

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February 2021

For further information contact:

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