

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 note and consider the contents of this report.

3.0 DETAIL

Response to Covid

- 3.1 Roads and Infrastructure Services have spent the last year mostly operating to pre-Covid specification/schedule and timetables taking into account Covid secure measures as appropriate.
- 3.2 Since 26 April 2021, although Scotland is now out of Lockdown, guidelines in respect of safe working methods are still being adhered to. 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.
- 3.3 Regular meetings continue to take 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. From 26 April, up to 50 people can attend a funeral service or post-funeral gathering such as a wake. This is provided that the venue size and layout will permit the necessary physical distancing between households to be in place. This means the number of people able to attend may be less, and sometimes significantly less, than the maximum for the level the

venue is in. Limited capacity at Crematorium limits this number to 18.

Capital Roads Reconstruction Programme

- 3.4 The proposed Roads Capital Programme was reported to the Environment, Development Infrastructure Committee in March 2021. As part of the 2021/22 budget process that took place on 25 February 2021 at the Full Council meeting, Members allocated an additional £2.61M for roads reconstruction. Additional schemes have now been added to what is now a £10M Roads Reconstruction programme for financial year 2021/22. The finalised programme is being reported to the Environment, Development Infrastructure Committee in June 2021 and can be viewed on the Council website.

Bin Collections and Civic Amenity Sites

- 3.5 Bin collections continue to full schedules, as mentioned above this is carried out with additional vehicles to ensure we have no more than 2 people per vehicle. All civic amenity sites are fully open and operating well with no significant issues to note.

Waste Strategy

- 3.6 Work continues on the Council's Waste Strategy which is taking into consideration the BMW ban which comes into place at the end of 2025, the 25 year PPP contract with Renewi which ends in September 2026, the deposit Return Scheme and the Household Waste Recycling Charter. Discussions continue with civil servants from Scottish Government regarding the above and discussion continue with neighbouring local authorities with a view to maximising collaboration opportunities.

Correspondence and Information

- 3.7 The team have recently began to issue weekly briefings to Members providing updates on staycation activity and planned works for the coming week. A RIS Twitter account was launched on 10 May 2021 which will provide helpful information to members of the public.
- 3.8 Our performance statistics for FOIs, complaint and member enquiries have improved significantly recently and the team have also reduced our customer contacts from over 50,000 in 2016/17 to just over 15,000 last year on the wider customer service front.

Winter Update

- 3.9 Winter maintenance services were delivered in line with the Council's Winter Maintenance Policy. Demands on this part of the services were significant 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 was good in part due to officers planning well ahead to ensure we have sufficient stocks available and held locally. Due to prolonged periods of adverse

weather, this saw an increase in pre-treatment runs as well as a greater amount of salt being used to ensure our road network remained safe for our communities and other road users.

Operations Works Programmes

- 3.10 Whilst works were scaled back significantly during the first lockdown at the start of the 2020/21 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 were carried out alongside winter maintenance, works to grasslands, cemeteries etc.
- 3.11 At the time of writing there has been quite a prolonged cold spell resulting in a slow growth of grass although the majority of amenity areas have received at least the first cut of the year. Roadside verges which receive a minimum number of cuts are likely to be commenced in late May/June depending on the rate of growth, these cuts being carried out largely for safety reasons to maintain visibility splays and also to stop grass growth encroaching onto the carriageway.

Cemetery Consultation

- 3.12 The purpose of the consultation was to seek community views on potential future cemetery provision across the Council area. The consultation saw views being expressed across our communities with specific issues put forward from island residents who were concerned that local cemeteries would be closed and mainland burials were viewed as very unpopular with strong comments that island residents did not want to be buried off of the islands. An analysis of the consultation is being carried out and a further consultation will be published picking up some of the questions and issues raised by respondents to the initial consultation.

School and Public Transport

- 3.13 The School Transport Team have been working closely with colleagues in Education as pupils returned to school in phases. All pupils returned full time after the Easter holidays. Work now begins on planning for the new school term in August.
- 3.14 As part of the budget process we carried out a review of public transport which has resulted in an action plan which has been considered by the Budget Working Group and a number of these are being progressed.

Ardencraig Nursery

- 3.15 The savings proposal to stop nursery growing service was accepted and means that our plant growing facilities at Kilmory Castle and Ardencraig will be mothballed with a view to future disposal. All plants to be externally sourced e.g. we will buy in fully formed plants therefore we will not require greenhouses, poly tunnels etc. in which to grow our own. What this means in practice is that

the flower beds across Argyll and Bute including in the Gardens at Arden Craig will continue to be planted, and the Gardens will remain open, the only difference being with flowers sourced externally.

- 3.16 The aviary and display glasshouses are being retained as these are integral parts of the Garden facility. The tearoom [which is currently vacant but has in the past been commercially leased] and the areas of polytunnels where the bedding plants are grown, will be repurposed, with the polytunnels used by the Council being decommissioned [a part of this area is already leased out]. The polytunnels will no longer be required to grow bedding plants for floral displays around the island as these plants will now be sourced externally as per the new policy position as a result of the agreed savings option. The future use of this part of the site remains to be seen – it will be part of a marketing/disposal exercise, and will be advertised in the normal way.

Landslip on A886 near Strachan

- 3.17 Work is ongoing following the landslip on A886 at Strachan. A consultant has been engaged and a drone survey completed. Ground investigation was carried out in early Feb 2021 and preliminary designs being undertaken shortly after laboratory test results back from Ground Investigation.

Rothesay Pontoons

- 3.18 We remain committed to delivering the improvements to Rothesay Outer Harbour Berth Pontoons, and have plans in place, despite meeting some unexpected challenges. The rockhead in the harbour is higher than the levels indicated by the test boreholes and previous piling in the harbour, which found no rock above 30 metres, and so we had to remove the piles. We've agreed a slight change to the layout of the pontoons and a trial pile will be set to see if the rockhead is deeper and the ground conditions in this location will permit driving of the piles.

Blairmore High Road Refuse Collections

- 3.19 Discussions with residents and landowners are ongoing to progress improvements to Blairmore High Road to enable kerbside refuse collections to continue from this private road.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 This report gives a general update to local members on recent Roads and Infrastructure activities.

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
Kirsty Flanagan**

**Policy Lead for Roads and Infrastructure Services
Councillor Rory Colville**

May 2021

For further information contact:
Jim Smith, Head of Roads and Infrastructure Services