

30<sup>th</sup> September 2021

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**POLICY LEADS REPORT**

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report provides members with an update on key areas of activity for each Policy Lead Councillor. This aims to provide updates from all Policy Leads as regularly as possible, so that all members are informed, up-to-date and able to engage with current issues.
- 1.2 The last update was provided to the council at its meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the report.

**3. POLICY LEAD FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES AND MAJOR PROJECTS –  
Councillor Gary Mulvaney**

- 3.1 **Introduction:** This report provides members with an update on my activities as Depute Leader, Policy Lead for Financial Services and Major Projects during the months from July to September 2021.
- 3.2 **Financial Services Team:** The department continues to consider budget monitoring and the Covid impact along with the future budget strategy, updating members, council and policy and resources in due course. The first meeting of the cross party Budget Working Group (BWG) took place last week.
- 3.3 **Local Tax Collections:** Current year Council Tax collection at 31st August 2021 is 47.92%, which is up 1.13% on collections at the same time last year. A number of taxpayers claimed hardship in 2020/2021 because of the pandemic and paid their April 2020 and May 2020 instalments in February 2021 and March 2021 so this increase in

collection rate is artificial. Comparing the collection rate to the last pre-pandemic year in August 2019 is more realistic and shows that we are 0.18% behind collections in that year which is a cash equivalent of £100,000. Works are continuing with Walker Love to target large debtors.

Current year Non-domestic rates (NDR) collections at 31st August 2021 is 64.13%, down 5.10% in comparison to 69.23% in August the previous year and up 2.19% on collections in the 2019/2020 year. This variation is because of movements in the level of rates relief we have been able to offer businesses between these years.

- 3.4 Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF):** Expenditure in SWF for the year to 31st August 2021 is £280,577, with the Council paying out at High and Medium priority levels. The annual budget is £458,827 - however this is due to be topped up with phase 2 funding to be released shortly by the Scottish Government.
- 3.5 Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs):** The total expenditure for DHPs at 31st August 2021, including commitments, is £787,614 against a confirmed total budget for the year of £984,000. This should be enough funding to cover the anticipated spend for the rest of the financial year.
- 3.6 Benefits processing:** As at 31st August 2021 Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction Scheme show average processing times of 20.30 days for new claims and 5.74 days for changes in circumstances. Whilst these speeds both fall below the service plan target of 21 days and 6 days respectively, there is evidence that processing times are slowing down due to a reduction in available staff resources, due to both staff absences and the increase in volume of Self Isolation Support Grants being processed. The position will be monitored closely going forward.
- 3.7 Flexible Food Fund:** The SWF has been administering claims for a new Flexible Food Fund project launched on 11th January. This scheme is funded by Scottish Government monies for food and fuel insecurities. At 31st August the project has delivered £845,000 of additional income for 589 families across Argyll and Bute - an average of £1,435 per household. The scheme has been short-listed for the national IRRV (Institute of Revenue Rating and Valuation) Performance Awards 2021 in the category Excellence in Innovation. The award ceremony is in October and I will update members on the outcome.
- 3.8 Helensburgh Waterfront Development:** At the end of August, we celebrated the first anniversary of Heron Bros Ltd starting work on-site. With ongoing Covid restrictions, it has taken a huge team effort from the

Council, Heron Bros Ltd and our Internal and External design consultants to get us to this important milestone. The progress achieved in the face of considerable challenge is a testament to the power of partnership and professionalism. It is all the more impressive given all the back office staff behind the Waterfront Development are working remotely to deliver the project.

Heron Bros has continued to make significant progress against their contract programme. The building structure is complete along with all the glazing installed. The flood defence walls and placement of rock armour around the site is complete, along with the installation of flood gates to the recently completed eastern slipway. The car park and public realm works are well underway.

The main pool tank is currently being fully filled with water, as part of the pre-tiling testing. Mechanical and electrical installations are progressing at a pace to the whole of the building including to ground floor changing village, reception area, plantroom, gym, fitness studios, sauna, steam room etc. Lomond stone walling to the bin store, electric sub-station and retaining walls are complete.

Whilst the project has made significant progress to date and is being delivered in the midst of a global pandemic, currently it remains on programme and within budget. However the Project Management Team recognise that issues of a commercial nature will likely emerge given the size and scale of this complex major capital project, and we continue to work closely with all parties to mitigate and minimise the potential impact of these upon the delivery of the works.

The project has once again achieved a rating of excellent in a recent audit conducted by the Considerate Constructors Scheme (CCS), a not-for-profit, independent organisation founded to raise standards in the construction industry. Heron Bros were commended in this recent CCS audit for extensive COVID-19 protection measures with the introduction of biometric scanner that all employees use for clocking in and out every day. The scanner uses retina recognition and also scans temperature giving a green light to proceed or a red light to leave site.

**3.9 Rothesay Pavilion:** Over the last several weeks, officers have been involved in detailed negotiations via an established National Construction Framework with a major construction contractor. Our initial engagement with them has enabled their appointment to undertake 'pre-construction activities'. This is where they will work closely with our in-house team and our design consultants to further develop our specific technical and contractual requirements for completing the refurbishment of the Rothesay Pavilion.

As members may be aware, the construction sector globally is facing unprecedented pressures arising due to a number of factors including the COVID pandemic and the recent blockage of the Suez Canal which, taken in combination, have impacted upon the availability and material and transportation costs for core construction resources, materials, plant and equipment.

As part of the pre-construction activities, the preferred contractor is undertaking an extensive market engagement exercise with its established supply chain, such that later this year it will be able to submit to us its' price and programme of activities to complete the works.

- 3.10 Depute Leader:** I have regular other meetings with the Leader, Policy Leads and the Chief Executive in respect of council business and priorities.

#### **4. POLICY LEAD FOR SUPPORT SERVICES – Councillor Mary Jean Devon**

- 4.1 Governance:** The council has agreed to record Committee Meetings for the website and this has been implemented for the recent Committee Meetings from May to date.

Significant work has been undertaken on implementation of new ICT systems and also progressing arrangements for introduction of virtual/hybrid meetings and livestreaming of Council meetings. This is a resource intensive and complex area of work activity with ongoing reports to council.

In addition, a Review of Council Constitution has been prepared for council in September. This also includes arrangements in the event of introduction of virtual/hybrid meetings and livestreaming.

A further report has been prepared outlining proposals for Best Practice Review of Political Management Arrangements with a view to making recommendations to a new Council in May 2022.

- 4.2 Childrens Panel:** Nine trainee panel members have successfully completed service training and have joined the rota from August 2021. The annual recruitment campaign, which is normally held in August/September, has been pushed back to January/February 2022.
- 4.3 Elections:** Local Government Elections May 2022. The first E-count bulletin has come in from the Election Management Board (EMB) and on-line training on the new Idox system for the core team took place in

the week of 30 August. The Returning Officer has requested monthly election meetings starting in September.

Boundary Commission Review (Islands Act) - Final Proposals were submitted by Boundaries Scotland to Scottish Ministers on 10th June. No date has yet been set for the proposals to be considered by Scottish Parliament. The assumption is that the decision by Scottish Parliament will be reported to council in November on associated Polling Districts and ward changes.

**4.4 Community Governance:** Following on from the relaxation of numbers permitted to gather in public, guidance was issued to all Community Councils last month on the safe resumption of their in-person meetings. Some face to face meetings have already taken place with other meetings planned.

The council will be invited to consider proposals for making a permanent change to the Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils at the end of this month for continuation of remote meetings to provide choice for community councils going forward. If approved this will require a formal 8 week public consultation.

**4.4 Procurement, Commercial and Contract Management:**

Local Spend:

The Procurement, Commissioning and Contract Management Team are monitoring the level of local spend and can confirm the year to date percentage spend with our local suppliers is 27.9%.

Local Suppliers Bidding and Winning Contracts:

Not all requirements can be fulfilled by the local supply market. Therefore, to gain a better understanding of performance, the number of tenders bid and subsequently won by local suppliers is also monitored. See below:

Process August	Total No. of Tenders	No. of Tenders receiving local bids	No. of Tenders won by local bidder	Success Rate % won of those bid for
Open/ Restricted	1	1	1	100.0%
Quick Quote	7	1	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>50.0%</b>

YTD	Total	69	28	19	67.9%
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The following example is a local supplier winning our contracts:

Title: **Live Argyll Leisure Management System**  
Value: **£199,700**

Supplier: **BC Technologies LLP**

Following an open tendering exercise, the replacement Leisure Management System contract has been awarded to a local contractor, BC Technologies, based in Dunoon.

**4.5 Complaints Handling:** There has been a positive outcome to the recent audit of the council's new Complaints procedure, with the audit opinion reported as High.

Work is continuing to provide more detailed monthly and quarterly reports to management, and all improvements to the Oracle system to provide these details now complete. The Central team continue to support colleagues in other services who are new to the role of complaints handling, providing training and support as appropriate.

**4.6 Customer Support Services – Apprenticeships Opportunities:**

Customer Support Services is committed to providing opportunities for young people to join the council's workforce through apprenticeships.

One of the areas that we have focussed on most recently is to encourage young people to take up a Digital Apprenticeship. We have roles in the ICT team and also our Customer Services and Engagement team – some of the service areas that are at the forefront of delivering our Digital First agenda.

We have one Digital apprentice currently studying for their Diploma in Digital Application Support at SCQF Level 6. In ICT, we have one staff member who has just completed their Graduate Apprenticeship via Glasgow Caledonian after coming through the ranks as a Modern Apprentice. They will graduate with a BSc (Hons) in Cyber Security this month and have secured a permanent job in the team.

Another excellent Modern Apprentice, who was working with the desktop team, has also moved on to a permanent post as an ICT Engineer. And our final Modern Apprentice just completed their course we were delighted when they were successful in their application to join the ICT Desktop Team, starting this month. We look forward to

welcoming more young people into our digital teams – they are all doing so well so far!

I am also aware that there are a number of staff within my portfolio services, as well as in other services right across the organisation and the area, who are undertaking study at various levels right up to university degrees. This requires very significant commitment and dedication, balancing study with family life and commitments and of course the day job. I am always delighted to hear about the successes of staff who are making the most of their skills in this way – my thanks and congratulations go to each and every one of our employees who is seeking to develop in this way.

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

**5.1: HSCP Leadership:** I am delighted to welcome David Gibson, as the new Head of Children, Families and Justice, and James Gow as Head of Finance and Transformation to the Health and Social Care Partnership. Many thanks to Patricia Renfrew and Brian Reid for covering Children, Families and Justice, and to George Morrison and David Forshaw for covering Finance in the interim since Alex Taylor and Judy Orr left.

Sadly Julie Lusk is leaving to take up a post with the Scottish Government, and I am grateful to her contributions as Head of Mental Health, Learning Disability, Addictions and Lifelong Conditions, and as Chief Social Work Officer during her time in Argyll and Bute.

**5.2 Local Activities:** The IJB met on 16<sup>th</sup> June and 15<sup>th</sup> September, reviewing the Child Poverty Action Plan Children and Young People's Service Plan, in addition to regular items on Culture, Finance and Public Health, in particular COVID-19.

At Finance and Policy Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> June and 27<sup>th</sup> August updates were received on savings and transformation activity, as well as consideration of budget monitoring, outlook and risks. The unaudited annual accounts came before Audit and Risk Committee on 29<sup>th</sup> June, however the approval of these has since been delayed due to factors outwith the control of the HSCP.

The Strategic Planning Group on 2<sup>nd</sup> September discussed the Joint Strategic Plan, draft Strategic Commissioning Strategy, and the Strategic Commissioning and Market Facilitation Plan, along with associated engagement specifications.

The Clinical Care Governance 9<sup>th</sup> September received reports on Care at Home Services, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and gaps in staffing, along with exception reports from across services and areas.

**5.3 National Meetings:** I attended COSLA Health and Social Care Board on 6<sup>th</sup> August, which included items on Learning Disability, Scottish Strategy for Autism and code of practice for Adult Support and Protection.

At the COSLA Children and Young People Board on 20<sup>th</sup> August there were presentations from Intercultural Youth Scotland on Race Equality and Anti-Racism in School, The Promise Change Programme and Lived Experience and the Participation of Children and Young People, along with papers on Early Learning and Childcare and Digital devices for school-aged children.

Other national meetings I have attended since my last report have included the IJB Chairs and Vice Chairs Exec on 1<sup>st</sup> July and 19<sup>th</sup> August, IJB Chairs and Vice Chairs Network on 29<sup>th</sup> July, discussions with COSLA Officers on 8<sup>th</sup> September and Scottish Government Civil Servants on 10<sup>th</sup> September, engagement with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care on 30<sup>th</sup> August, a government consultation event on 10<sup>th</sup> September and the Scottish IJBs Remote, Rural and Islands Subgroup on 13<sup>th</sup> September.

These have all been dominated by consideration of the Scottish Government proposals for a National Care Service. Based on the Feeley Report, implementation of which had been a manifesto commitment, what has been put forward goes far beyond this, and is generating considerable debate about to what extent this is necessary to achieve, or will be able to contribute to improved outcomes and experiences for service users.

**5.4 Children and Young People:**

Children and Young People's Service Plan (CYPSP) 2020-23 – work is progressing on the Year 2 priorities within this. On the 1<sup>st</sup> September an animated version of the Plan developed by the Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) was launched and can be viewed on the GIRFEC website at <https://argyll-bute-girfec.com/>

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) – work is continuing to develop a recruitment plan to meet the Scottish Government service specification for a Tier 3 service managing scheduled care. This will also encompass the CAMHS to age 25 years

element of the additional government funding given. The team recruited already includes a Consultant Lead Psychologist, Advanced Nurse Practitioners, Occupational Therapists and a Dietitian, with additional posts to be advertised. The Mental Health Recovery and Renewal Fund has enabled use of agency nurses to reduce numbers on the waiting lists for Primary Mental Health Worker assessment and Tier 3 assessment. Issues continue with recruiting permanent Consultant Psychiatrists due to a national shortage in this field, with the service being maintained through use of locums.

School Counsellors – this service is now in place across Argyll and Bute, with over 200 referrals to date including from Education and self-referrals.

National Guidance for Child Protection – this has been updated by the Scottish Government. Over a two year implementation period this will be further linked into the GIRFEC approach, with Case Conferences becoming Child Protection planning meetings, and a greater focus on participation and engagement of children and families in the assessment and planning processes. Full details are available at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021/>.

Guidance for Child Protection Committees Undertaking Reviews of Significant Events – this has been newly published and places a much greater emphasis on learning and embedding changes. The Child Protection Committee will lead on the adoption of this over the coming months, with further information available at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-guidance-child-protection-committees-undertaking-learning-reviews/>.

Child Protection Committee sub-group – a multi-agency forum is operating to monitor any physical assaults of a child, which could have previously had the defence of reasonable chastisement. Under the Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Act 2019 Police have powers to warn and issue fines to any parent, without the necessity to progress through Child Protection and court proceedings, however locally there have been very few cases which have required to be progressed to fines.

Children's Hearings – incorporation of the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) into Scots Law and the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019 has been followed by a staged eighteen month implementation. In 2020 offence was removed as grounds for referral for children under the age of 12, and the remaining changes are coming into statute at the end of October 2021.

Where such children have caused significant harm to others, new procedures, duties and powers have been given for Police and Local Authorities to interview and provide places of safety using Children Interview Rights Practitioners. The Scottish Government in partnership with Social Work Scotland is supporting training for staff, prior to full implementation on 21<sup>st</sup> October.

## **5.5 Adult Services:**

Care Homes – a fortnightly task force meeting is supporting internal and independent homes. Revised Scottish Government guidance on COVID-19 self-isolation and social distancing has been put into effect. Along with this work to ensure that residents, including those outwith Argyll and Bute, have had a review within the last 6 months is underway. Where possible this is through Near Me remote meetings to reduce travel and footfall in homes.

Care at Home – significant challenges are being experienced in recruitment to this sector, with significant numbers of hours being handed back by providers. Oban, Lorn and Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands have been most affected to date, although Helensburgh is also facing difficulties with staff moving to work in West Dunbartonshire. With persistent issues such as Brexit and COVID-19, a care at home strategy group has been established to look at short, medium and long terms plans for the service.

Hospitals – all have seen increases in Accident and Emergency attendance which has been largely appropriate. Stretched staffing arising from vacant posts and COVID-19 self-isolation is being managed.

Learning Disabilities – work continues in line with Government guidelines to re-open day services, subject to risk management and consideration for the safety of vulnerable service users. The service is liaising with Housing to re-establish suitable and sustainable housing for community living to replace that being withdrawn by a private sector provider.

Mental Health – statutory work is continuing to be delivered with no backlog, however Succoth Ward staffing remains pressured and consideration is being given to recruiting differently to these posts.

Addictions – notification of funding for Argyll and Bute has been given and in conjunction with the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (ADP) and partners work is being progressed to investigate the potential to develop and integrate Addictions services.

Adult Support and Protection Inspection – a largely positive outcome report has been received, with the service working to address the associated action plan for improvement.

- 5.6 Finance:** Whilst the outturn for the HSCP reported as of 31<sup>st</sup> July was for a forecast overspend of £1.4m this is expected to improve to £0.8m following further analysis of Social Work Budgets. However, in line with the Integration Scheme, and to reduce any risk of overspend to Argyll and Bute Council and NHS Highland a Financial Recovery Plan was approved by the IJB on September 15<sup>th</sup>. Initially this focuses on approval of Social Work Care Packages and Allocation of Income to address cost pressures. If necessary further actions will be brought forward to Delay Planned Projects, increase Vacancy Management and remove non-essential spending.

## **6. POLICY LEAD FOR ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES – Councillor Rory Colville**

- 6.1** It has been a very busy summer period for Roads and Infrastructure. Below is an overview of some of the activities that I and the service and have been involved with over the last couple of months.
- 6.2 Oban Harbour:** There are three separate Harbour Orders in place for Oban: the North Pier, Railway Pier and South Pier. The approaches and waters through the bay are not covered by an order. The responsibility for these waters defaults to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA).

In 2018 CMAL were preparing to commence a formal process which would allow them to become the Harbour Authority for the waters currently not covered within Oban Bay. This had been supported by the Council's Harbour Board at the time, providing unfettered access could be provided to the Council's North Pier which was to be left nested within the bay.

Following a public meeting where there was some concern expressed about CMAL becoming the new Harbour Authority the Council, through its Harbour Board, asked CMAL to pause its process to allow a community group to develop an alternative proposal – the trust port option. A community group was formed named Oban Community Harbour Development Association (OCHDA) which consists of a number of volunteers who have been seeking to progress a Trust Port model for Oban Bay.

The Harbour Board at the request of Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee recently met with representatives of OCHDA to hear first-hand their proposals for establishing a Trust port model. Originally it had

been suggested that OCHDA could pursue a Wet Port option which would have left the current Harbour limits and North Pier assets with the Council. OCHDA have stated that they no longer see this as a viable option and now seek to lease council assets at and around the North Pier. These assets are: Harbour Masters office and wider harbour building, the berthing face of the North Pier, the transit berth marina and the Oban Times Slip.

Following the Harbour Board meeting of 2nd September, board members agreed to visit the North Pier in Oban as part of their Development Programme and see at first hand the many capital improvements the council have delivered. The Board also agreed to hold a special meeting early in December 2021 and that an options appraisal process be conducted to determine a preferred option for the future management of Oban Bay and the engagement that will be carried out with other partners who have an interest in Oban Bay.

**6.3 Marine Asset Management Plan:** Our rolling ten-year Marine Asset Management Plan was recently reported to the Council's Harbour Board on 2 September 2021. The report provided an updates on the following projects:

- Craignure
  - Passenger Access at existing terminal
  - Public consultation – New Pier
- Iona / Fionnphort
- Rothesay
  - Piling and grouting works
  - Pontoons
- Dunoon / Kilcreggan

The full report can be viewed here (item 5): [Agenda for Argyll and Bute Harbour Board on Thursday, 2 September 2021, 12:30 pm - Argyll and Bute Council \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#)

**6.4 Road and Footway Improvements:** Really good progress is being made on our £10M Roads Reconstruction Programme. Individual scheme details can be found on our website here: [Roads Capital Programme \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](#)

In addition to this, £0.9M has been invested in a footway and active travel improvement programme which will see over 40 schemes being delivered across Argyll and Bute. More information on the footway schemes can be found in a report which was considered by the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee here (item 6): [Agenda for Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee](#)

[on Thursday, 2 September 2021, 10:30 am - Argyll and Bute Council \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](https://argyll-bute.gov.uk)

- 6.5 Staycation Initiative:** In response to the increase in visitors to Argyll and Bute, the service continues to deliver a number of initiatives including parking enforcement, fly tipping and litter management, additional public bin collections, working with communities and local groups, enhanced cleaning of our 57 public conveniences and traffic management.



- 6.6 New recycling service for Kintyre:** The new recycling service for Kintyre will commence on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> October. The team have been really busy behind the scenes to ensure all arrangements are in place for residents and businesses to ensure a smooth roll out. A briefing session has also been arranged for local Elected Members on 20<sup>th</sup> September to provide information and answer any queries ahead of the new service starting.
- 6.7 Winter Maintenance:** Preparations are in place for the upcoming winter with several hired vehicles due in advance of the season. We have also purchased a number of multi-body vehicles which have ploughing capability as well as gritting capability.



Our Winter Policy 2021-22 was considered at the September meeting of the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee which remains the same as previous years. The full report and policy can be read in full here (item 7): [Agenda for Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee on Thursday, 2 September 2021, 10:30 am - Argyll and Bute Council \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/Agenda-for-Environment-Development-and-Infrastructure-Committee-on-Thursday-2-September-2021-1030-am)

- 6.8 EV Charging:** We have recently received Energy Saving Trust funding to expand Fleet charge point infrastructure, in addition to this we are expecting, in the next month, SG funding to install a new public rapid charger which will be located in Tighnabruaich

Joint working with the FASTER project is progressing and could potentially see 9 new public installations across Argyll and Bute. At time of writing, this was due to feature at a Members Seminar on 21<sup>st</sup> September, where a presentation will be given on a consolidated long list of possible future sites for electric vehicle charging provision based on the methodology and criteria agreed at Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee in June.

- 6.9 Route Optimisation:** The service are working with colleagues in Procurement and IT to put together tender information to go to the market for a proven solution that will allow for intelligent routing functions to be performed via a system rather than manually. The first phase of this work is likely to focus on bin routes and will include in-cab technology for up to date information on service delivery. In future the system could be used for winter gritting, gully cleaning, home to school transport etc.

- 6.10 Play park funding:** The Council has recently received notification from the Scottish Government of funding for playpark works in this and future years. This year we have received just over £70,000 and officers are currently coming up with plans to spend that money - these plans should be presented to councillors for a decision in early course.

We are in the process of getting further information from the Scottish Government on what future funding may look like. Ideally we will be clear on the amount of funding coming forward over a three to five year period to allow us to plan properly for a comprehensive programme of upgrades.

The initial batch of funding will look at areas in need of refurbishment on a priority basis and then if we have funds left look at disability inclusive play equipment.

**6.11 Dog fouling campaign:** A brief update on the council's dog fouling campaign where we set out to raise awareness via community involvement and owners cleaning up after their dogs.

To date seven community councils have requested 110 posters for use in their local areas. Our wardens also put them up in known hot spots. We reached 58,500 through Facebook with the campaign and 3071 people engaged directly with the campaign by liking posts, clicking on links, commenting and sharing the posts.

From January to mid-August, there were a total of 616 views of the dog warden page on the website. 157 of these page views were during the four weeks of the #makeyourpupproud campaign, which is 25% of the total.

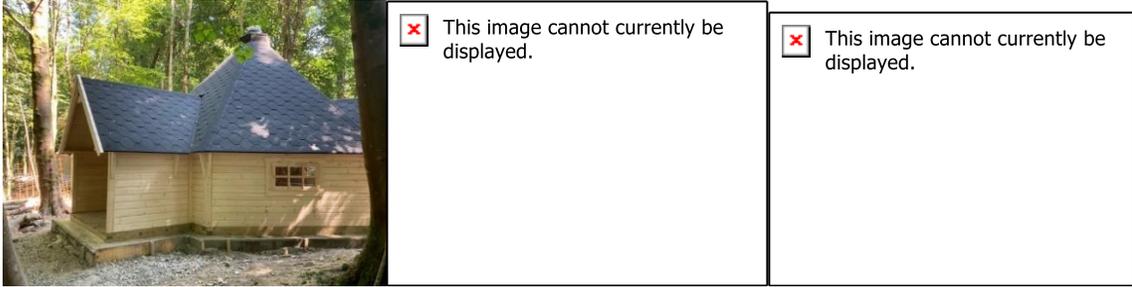
We inspired people to click through to the dog warden page on the website directly from social media and to go directly to the 'report online' form.

Sixteen members of staff, their families and dogs joined in the campaign and gave brilliant stories about why people should #pickup.

Wardens reported an increase in reports of dog fouling during and after the campaign, particularly in MAKI and a smaller spike in Bute and Cowal.

## **7. POLICY LEAD FOR EDUCATION – Councillor Yvonne McNeilly**

**7.1 Early Years:** Early Years were delighted to welcome their first children to the new outdoor nursery, Silver Birch, in Hunters Quay, Dunoon from 16<sup>th</sup> August. This fabulous new setting is nestled into a former community woodland area tucked between the Hunters Quay Hotel and a residential area. Feedback from parents on the provision has been very positive, with reports that the children are very much enjoying their learning and sleeping soundly at night!



Willow View ELC in Oban also opened its doors at the start of the new term. Whilst this is an indoor nursery the outdoor area is extensive and offers a range of challenging and stimulating areas for children to explore and create in. The outdoor setting has a natural area which offers future use for Forest School activities for other settings in order to support equity across the Early Years service.



Both of these sustainable spaces provide a wealth of opportunities, and add to the choice and number of placements available within two of our main towns.

**7.2 Argyll and Bute's Children and Young People's Service Plan:** Over the past year a multi-agency group has been working with a group of young people from across the authority as part of the 2020-2023 Children and Young People's Service Plan's (CYPSP) priority 4 on the voice of children and young people. The Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) has been using Improvement Methodology to look at how to engage young people in having a voice in the next CYPSP.

YAP identified the need for young people to be able to access and understand what a Children and Young People's Service plan is before they would be able to give informed views. Provided below is a link to the animation project that they have developed at every stage (researching, planning, designing, voicing and also providing feedback to the production company).

YAPs are really proud of the work they have progressed in developing an animation that explains the Argyll and Bute CYPSP to young people. The launch of the animation across services and partners took place on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021. You can view the animation here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07CdxASKjNA>.

**7.3 Inclusion and Equality Team:** As part of the ongoing commitment to provide ASN teaching and support staff with opportunities to build on their knowledge and skills, a survey was undertaken across the authority to establish areas of strength within the service and to identify any challenges or gaps in knowledge and good practice. The data collated as part of this exercise has been utilised to inform the development of a training calendar for 2021-2022 and, as a result, bespoke training has been provided in regard to Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, ASD and girls, ADHD and Down's syndrome. This will increase understanding in key ASN areas and improve confidence in managing ASN needs in the classroom. Further evaluations will be carried out to assess the efficacy of each training session and the ASN survey will also be carried out on an annual basis to ensure continuous improvement.

As part of the in service days, online training workshops in 'Deaf Awareness' were also provided to teaching and support staff in four high schools across the authority. The training was provided by Elena Adair and Joe O'Donnell, who has worked in deaf education for 35 years as a Teacher of the Deaf and an Educational Audiologist. He has worked in a range of educational establishments, primary and secondary and for Donaldson's school – which was the national school for the deaf. It was a privilege for the authority to have the opportunity to collaborate with him on this and for all attending to learn from his expertise.

Supporting learners who are deaf is a key part of the commitment as teachers to the professional values of integrity, trust and respect and social justice. At present there are over 60 children in educational establishments across the authority who have varying degrees of deafness; research shows that even mild hearing loss can have a significant impact on children's learning and health and wellbeing. It is therefore hugely important that teachers feel confident that they have the knowledge and support to ensure that they are able to teach children effectively to ensure inclusion. Moreover, the continued use of face masks or coverings in schools is something that has significant implications to many deaf children and it is therefore vitally important that teachers are made aware of strategies and interventions that may help mitigate this impact.

**7.4 Developing the Young Workforce Cluster Leads:** Four Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) Cluster Leads were appointed in July and began work with the authority on 2<sup>nd</sup> August. Their role is to work in partnership with schools and other partners to develop the links between secondary schools and local and national employers. As a result, young people will have greater choice and quality of work placements, and employers will work more closely with schools in contributing to the curriculum, particularly as it relates to skills for life and work.

The appointments are a result of several months careful planning and liaison with the Scottish Government, who have funded the posts as part of a national initiative. All four Cluster Leads, who each cover the schools in a different geographical area of the authority, have shown themselves to be enthusiastic, creative and self-starting in their first three weeks of work, which have included a varied induction programme.

- 7.5 Primary One Literacy Assessment and Action Resource (POLAAR) for Gaelic Medium Education:** Over the last year, Education Officer Catriona Garvin has worked in partnership with Education Scotland to adapt the Primary One Literacy Assessment and Action Resource (POLAAR) programme for Gaelic Medium Education. The resource is a proven tool for planning high-quality learning and teaching around reading at First Level, with a focus on sounds known as phonics. All of the many games and activities in the programme, as well as the phonics and language aspects themselves, have been replaced by content relevant to Gaelic culture, context and language, with much of the work having been carried out by teachers in four Argyll and Bute schools – Salen, Bunessan, Bowmore and Sandbank.

The Gaelic POLAAR programme is now live on Education Scotland's website, where the Argyll and Bute logo can be seen prominently. Catriona will be presenting on the programme to a national audience at the Scottish Learning Festival in late September.

- 7.6 School Improvement Planning – GME-Specific Planning:** Argyll and Bute Council has been identified by the Scottish Government body *Bòrd na Gàidhlig* as a model of excellent practice. This recognition is due to the work that has been undertaken to develop the standard school improvement planning template, by including a section specifically dedicated to strategic planning for Gaelic Medium Education. The model was presented by Simon Easton to other local authorities at an online seminar in June, and the authority has been asked to present its practice at The Scottish Learning Festival in September. Well done to all involved.

- 7.7 Summer Programme:** By utilising Scottish Government funding, Argyll and Bute Council were able to provide a three-week programme across seven venues for targeted pupils to support them during the summer break. The programme was targeted at low income families, children with additional support needs and other young people that schools had nominated. An average of 322 young people attended the venues each day, with positive feedback from the young people and their families.

The authority were also able to provide additional provision for children on Lismore and Gigha, which proved to be very successful.

A wide range of activities were provided as part of the programme, from Arts and Crafts, sporting activities, outdoor education to Alpaca walking on Bute.

Partnerships were established with third sector organisations and new internal partnerships were also cemented due to the close collaborative working that took place both during the lead up to and during the 3 week programme.

Feedback from some of the children included:

*"We loved it."*

*"It is good for your health being active during holidays."*

*"I enjoyed it and made some new friends. The teachers were great."*

*"Everything was great."*

*"I met new friends and was not bored."*

*"It was fun to do."*

*"The staff were amazing kind helpful and would love a repeat next year it has really helped my confidence."*

The service are currently preparing a full report including 'lessons learned' which will be shared with the Scottish Government.

**7.8 Psychological Services:** The service have been successful in appointing two teachers for a period of 12 months to join the nurture team, promoting and supporting Our Children Their Nurturing Education (OCTNE), utilising additional funding directed at COVID recovery. There has been excellent engagement across schools, with support from the Educational Psychology team and Principal Teacher of Nurture, providing bespoke support aligned to the identified needs of each educational establishment. OCTNE will maintain a focus on increasing the quality of the nurturing environments across our schools so that children and young people can build relationships and learn to the very best of their ability. The enhancement to this team will allow extension of these developments in to the Early Years as well as supporting schools who are further on in the nurture journey to audit their progress using the accreditation framework.

During the in-service days held in August 2021, requests for training by the Educational Psychology Service have had a significant focus on topics relating to mental health and wellbeing including Nurture, the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) curriculum, resilience, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) approaches to supporting young people at the secondary stage using Living Life to the Full and developing a PACE approach (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy) to meeting the needs of children and young people in distress. There has been high level engagement throughout the sessions, often with full school teams engaging with professional learning together to drive the ethos and practice across the school establishment. The

Educational Psychology Service is working to identify the impact of this professional learning on practice over time.

Despite the ongoing challenges of the pandemic and at all times following safety guidance, the Educational Psychology team is delighted to be spending more time with children, young people, families and staff within schools and communities to build solutions through understanding the context within which children and young people grow, develop and learn.

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

- 8.1 Planning Applications:** Since 1st April 2021 submission rates for planning applications has remained high, with 864 formal submissions being received up to 1st September 2021. This is an increase of 158 applications for the same period last year when 706 applications were received and is close to the number received in 2019 when 871 applications had been received for the same period.
- 8.2 Planning Fee Income:** Planning fee income to 1st September 2021 was £70k below the forecast budget following poor income in July and August despite a continuing high volume of applications. A £77k fee for a major application has still to be collected which should boost the income for September.
- 8.3 Planning Performance Framework 2020/21:** The 10th Planning Performance Framework (PPF) report has been prepared and submitted to the Scottish Government for review and as in previous years the report focuses on the council being ‘open for business’.

The PPF presents case studies and examples of good practice throughout the document and although it is principally the annual performance measure for Planning Services which the Scottish Government scrutinise and score the document provides an opportunity for Planning Services to promote their service and the local area by incorporating customer feedback and case studies within the document. During 2020/21 the resilience, effectiveness and efficiency of the Planning Service has been significantly affected by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and this year’s PPF includes commentary which addresses those factors.

As with previous year’s feedback from the Scottish Government will be reported to the Planning, Protective Services and Licensing committee when this is to hand.

- 8.4 Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2):** As members will be aware at the last council meeting members authorised officers to establish the Examination process and submit all the necessary documentation to the Scottish Governments Department of Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA) after final checks and edits of the Schedule 4 forms had been concluded under the delegated authority of the Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth. This work has almost been completed and it is anticipated that all the required documentation will be submitted to the DPEA in early October.
- 8.5 PPSL Training:** PPSL training recommenced after the summer recess on 22nd September with a presentation from Laura MacLean, Planning Unit Manager (SW) and Judith Montford, Senior Planning Officer with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) The training sessions, which are bite-sized sessions covering a range of subjects, are generally held monthly before meetings of the Planning, Protective Services and Licensing (PPSL) committee and are open to all elected members.
- 8.6 Consultation Update:** Feedback from the recent on-line consultation in relation to the Argyll and Bute Technical Working Note has still to be considered by officers, although this is not a priority at this time and it has been noted that when progressing this now the document should be reviewed to reflect LDP2 given the timing.
- 8.7 Building Standards Staffing:** The recruitment process for an Area Team Leader in Helensburgh has concluded and David MacLachlan has been appointed and will take up the post on 4th October.
- 8.8 Building Standards Income:** Building Standards income for 2021/22 to the end of August was £364,289 from 666 applications which is 96% of projected income. This is an improvement from 20/21 but down 15% from income levels in 19/20 and although income is dependent upon the building market and economy the situation is being closely monitored.
- 8.9 Commercialisation:** Commercialisation work for other authorities has dried up recently for a number of reasons, including Covid-19, although East Lothian Council continue to use our services there is no long term commitment in place.
- 8.10 Local Air Quality Progress Report:** Work has recently been completed on local air quality and concludes that local air quality in Argyll and Bute is good and well below prescribed standards, a report is due to come to PPSL committee highlighting the findings in October.

**8.11 Regulatory Services:** Covid-19 work continues, albeit with less enforcement powers, to ensure that there is continued compliance with national guidance. A programme of work providing advice/guidance and reinforcing controls is ongoing targeted at specific businesses and events and signage in town centres with updated guidance is due to be replaced over the next few weeks.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

**9.1** This report provides members with an update on each of the 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 – 21<sup>st</sup> September 2021**

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