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30<sup>th</sup> June 2022

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**LEADER'S REPORT**

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Leader of the Council and Policy Lead Councillors have routinely provided a report outlining their strategic activities for consideration at each meeting of Argyll and Bute Council, except for the annual budget meeting in February.
- 1.2 This report is the first such since the appointment of the council Leader and Policy Lead Councillors on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2022. This report provides an update on the activities of the council Leader, Cllr Robin Currie, for the short period 19<sup>th</sup> May to 17<sup>th</sup> June 2022.
- 1.3 Policy Lead Councillors have started to meet with services following their appointment in May. The first full Policy Leads report will come to the September council meeting.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the report.
- 2.2 Members are asked to note that any reports, briefings or copy correspondence referred to in the report can be requested as appropriate through the Leadership Support Manager, although it should be noted that some confidential reports provided by external organisations such as COSLA may be restricted.

### 3. LEADER ACTIVITY 19<sup>TH</sup> MAY TO 17<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2022

#### 3.1 COSLA MEETINGS

COSLA, like Scottish councils, has had its own governance arrangements to consider following the Local Government Elections in May.

With most Scottish councils having appointed their leaders or able to nominate a representative, the first COSLA Leaders meeting took place on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2022, considering the following agenda items:

- Welcome and introduction to COSLA
- Pay Claim 2022/23
- Councillor Remuneration
- Transient Visitor Tax
- Water and Billing Charges
- National Strategy for Community Justice Revision
- Mental Health Law Review
- Prevention of Homelessness Duties
- Ukrainian Displaced Persons - Draft Partnership Agreement with the Scottish Government
- Distribution

On 17<sup>th</sup> June, COSLA held its first Convention meeting of the new term, with the main focus of business being the election and establishment of COSLA's political leadership team, the full agenda being:

- Election of President - Cllr Shona Morrison, Moray Council
- Election of Vice-President - Cllr Steven Heddle, Orkney Isles Council
- Office Bearers Job Descriptions
- Appointment of Spokespersons:
  - Resources Spokesperson – Cllr Katie Hagmann, Dumfries and Galloway Council
  - Health and Social Care Spokesperson – Cllr Paul Kelly, North Lanarkshire Council
  - Community Wellbeing Spokesperson – Cllr Maureen Chalmers, South Lanarkshire Council
  - Environment and Economy Spokesperson – Cllr Gail Macgregor, Dumfries and Galloway Council
  - Children and Young People Spokesperson – Cllr Tony Buchanan, East Renfrewshire Council
- Appointments to outside and other bodies
- Appointments to Audit Group
- Minutes of Previous Convention
- COSLA Strategic Context and Priorities

- European Charter of Local Self Government - update

Later the same day, a special meeting of COSLA Leaders was called to consider the following issues:

- Resource Spending Review
- Pay Claim 2022/23
- Childrens Care and Justice Bill Consultation
- Supporting Communities - Poverty and Cost of Living
- Home Office Asylum Consultation
- Regulation of Marches and Parades
- Covid-19 Financial Support for Adult Social Care Providers

COSLA Policy Board meetings are due to commence after the summer recess, from August onwards, with the Leaders meetings taking place as normal each month with additional Special Leaders sessions when there is urgent business to consider.

### **3.2 New homes for Inveraray - Dun na Cuaiche opening, 26<sup>th</sup> May:**

Following the appointments made at council on 19<sup>th</sup> May, I retain responsibility for the Housing portfolio as part of my Economy and Rural Growth Policy Lead role. I was therefore delighted to visit Inveraray on 26<sup>th</sup> May to carry out the official opening of Argyll Community Housing Association's (ACHA) new affordable homes development - the aptly named Dun na Cuaiche.

This £1.9million development started on site in April 2021 and has been delivered in 13 months by local Mull-based builder, TSL Contractors Ltd. It brings ten much-needed affordable homes to Inveraray in a mix of one, two and three-bedroom properties, including some with special adaptations.

Pupils from Inveraray Primary School were also present, having chosen the name Dun na Cuaiche which has such strong local links.

It is always a pleasure to see people receiving the keys to their brand new homes. Housing is an issue of serious significance for Argyll and Bute and will be a priority for all partners involved in securing and delivering housing for our communities over the coming term.

### **3.3 Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership, 9<sup>th</sup> June 2022:**

The first meeting of the new council term of the Highlands and Islands REP took place on 9<sup>th</sup> June, following the establishment of the Partnerships in 2021 and the most recent meeting in February 2022 prior to the election.

The Partnership brings together leadership and senior management from member councils across the Highlands and Islands region, as well as representatives from lead agencies dealing with strategic issues like skills and further education, economy, transport, environment and more.

Agenda topics for this first meeting of the new term were:

- Crown Estate Scotland - Scotwind
- National Strategy for Economic Transformation
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- Information papers on:
  - National Planning Framework 4
  - Strategic Transport Projects Review 2
  - Labour and Skills
  - Energy Cost Impacts

### **3.4 Correspondence:**

The matter of the A83 Rest and Be Thankful is always a priority and, as we embark on a new term, this will continue to be the case. My first correspondence following my election as Leader was to write to Jenny Gilruth MSP, Minister for Transport, highlighting again the vital importance of finding a permanent solution at pace but also indicating our concern to ensure that the Scottish Government's capital spending review does not impact upon plans for the Rest.

I have asked for a discussion with the Minister about this, following requests made prior to the election, and while I have not yet received a response, I hope that a meeting will be possible. I will update colleagues when I hear more from Ms Gilruth.

I am also in touch with the RABT Campaign Group on inviting them to a seminar for all councillors and again will provide a further update on this when we have finalised arrangements for this session, which will take place after the council recess.

I have also received correspondence from Shona Robison MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Housing and Local Government and Ben Macpherson, Minister for Social Security and Local Government. Both

Ministers cite the importance of working in partnership and building on *‘the outstanding work undertaken by councils to responding to the unprecedented challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic’* and emphasises that *‘only by working collaboratively between both spheres of government will we be able to deliver our mutual aims and ambitions’*. I will be writing back to the Ministers and would hope that there will be an opportunity in the near future to welcome one or both to Argyll and Bute for further discussion.

Over the next few weeks I am also due to meet with Rhoda Grant MSP when she visits Argyll and Bute, and will provide an update on that meeting in a future Leader’s Report.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1** This report highlights the activities of the Leader of Argyll and Bute Council for the period from 19<sup>th</sup> May to 17<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

**Councillor Robin Currie  
Leader, Argyll and Bute Council**

**20<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

**For further information or to access the Leader’s Report Pack please contact Aileen McNicol, Leadership Support and Member Services Manager, telephone 01546 604014 or email [aileen.mcnicol@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:aileen.mcnicol@argyll-bute.gov.uk)**