

24th November 2022

POLICY LEADS REPORT

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 Policy Leads report was considered by Council at its meeting on 29th September 2022. This latest report provides an update on activity from that date until 10th November 2022.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the report.

**3. POLICY LEAD FOR FINANCE AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES –
Councillor Gary Mulvaney**

- 3.1 **Introduction:** This report provides members with an update on my activities as Depute Leader and Policy Lead for Finance and Commercial Services during the period from September till November 2022
- 3.2 **Financial Services Team:** The department continues to monitor in-year revenue and capital positions, where there is forecast £117k overspend for revenue and £4k for capital. Work on next year's budget continues and an updated budget outlook was presented to the recent Budget Working Group, with a gap of £7m next year rising to an accumulated gap of £35m in 2027/28. Members and our communities clearly face some difficult choices and consequences as we set a balanced budget.

The recent announcement from the Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, that councils can consider policy flexibilities within this challenging fiscal picture is to be welcomed, and officers will further explore what these could be and how they contribute to the options available for members' consideration.

- 3.3 Local Tax Collections:** The Council Tax collection rate at the end of October 2022 is 67.99%, 2% up on the same time last year. The increased collection level is due to the £4.33 million cost of living award that was allocated directly to Council Tax accounts at the start of the year, although it should be noted that on a month to month basis the level of increased collections is reducing.

Sheriff officers have reported difficulties in collection performance post summons related to the cost of living crisis and because we are passing over less debt to them for collection this year as the number of debtors in receipt of benefit increases.

The non-domestic rates (NDR) collection rate at the end of October 2022 is 73.61%, down 3.24% in comparison to the previous year.

- 3.4 Benefits Update:**

Benefits Processing: As at 30 October 2022 processing speeds for Housing Benefit show average processing times of 28.88 days for new claims and 9.37 days for change in circumstances, for the year from 1st April. This is unfortunately worse than the previous month, however, there was a significant amount of annual leave taken in October due to school holidays along with a temporary vacancy that is yet to be filled.

We continue to look at ways to improve processes through the Business Process Reengineering (BPR) works that we are undertaking in an effort to eliminate wasteful processes and improve performance. The BPR outcomes will be reported to ELT on 15 November 2022.

Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs): Expenditure in SWF and DHP is steady and we are not projecting costs over the annual budget of £458,827 for SWF and £961,000 for DHP.

Flexible Food Fund: At the end of September the project has delivered £1.998 million of additional income for 1,406 families across Argyll and Bute an average of £1,420 per household. Half of the households being supported are single adults living alone, 30% are single parents and 15% are families with children in the household.

3.5 **Commercial Services Update:**

Helensburgh Leisure Centre: I was very proud to formally open this fantastic new community asset alongside the Provost on 7th October. The event was a huge success with a wide range of community representatives in attendance, not least former world and European champion, and two times Olympic swimmer Ross Murdoch. It was a privilege to have Ross join us and try out the pool, alongside Helensburgh Amateur Swim Club. It is an experience all of us will remember and cherish for a long time.

Since the facility opened the feedback from the 1000 + new members has been extremely positive and this is a big step forward for the regeneration of Helensburgh.

I would like to take this opportunity to pass on my thanks and congratulations to everyone who has been involved in this project, including all the officers, partners and contractors. It has been a huge achievement delivering the project on time, during what has been a very challenging period, constructing during the pandemic.

We are already looking to the next phase of supporting our town centre by creating complementary commercial opportunities at the site of the former pool and anticipate further updates that will be shared later this month.

Learning Estate Investment Programme (LEIP): Commercial Services are leading the preparation of a bid to the Scottish Government's highly competitive LEIP and I am pleased to report that our bid was successfully submitted by the 31st October deadline. It is now a waiting game as our request for part funding of a new £35.5m campus on Mull is considered alongside a number of others from across Scotland. It is anticipated that an announcement on which bids have been successful will be made by Scottish Government Ministers in December.

Place Demonstrator Funding: The Scottish Government sought applications from local authorities that have undertaken Place Based Reviews (PBR) and are in a position this financial year to implement the outcomes of the review. In this regard, Commercial Services submitted a funding bid in August 2022 and have had verbal confirmation that we have been awarded in the region of £650k. This funding will allow the Our Modern Workspace Project Team to accelerate the redesign proposals in Rothesay. A paper will come to the Policy and Resources Committee in December to obtain formal commitment to spend the funding on this project.

Rothesay Pavilion: The lobbying exercise is now well underway and, to assist with the implementation of our action plan, external consultants have been procured. An initial meeting has taken place between our officers and officials supporting the Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development. The issue also featured on the agenda for the Argyll and Bute Parliamentary Forum on 8th November and a seminar for members takes place on 17th November. A report will be prepared detailing the outcome of the lobbying activity, and what our options are moving forward, for consideration as part of the budget planning process.

- 3.6. Depute Leader:** I have regular other meetings with the Leader, Policy Leads and the Chief Executive in respect of council business and priorities. In addition, I have deputised for the Leader at COSLA meetings. I, along with officers, the Leader, and Cllr Reeni Kennedy-Boyle (who was deputising for Cllr Lynch) were pleased to meet some of our MSPs at Holyrood where we updated them on the challenges we face and lobbied specifically in relation to the BMW ban and Rothesay Pavilion.

4. POLICY LEAD FOR EDUCATION – Councillor Yvonne McNeilly

- 4.1 Dunoon Grammar School World Success:** Following on from my update at the last meeting, I am delighted to report that DGS were crowned the World's Best School for Community Collaboration at the live event hosted by T4 Education on 19th October 2022.

The Community Collaboration Prize recognises schools that have collaborated and developed partnerships with their community to have an integrated approach in helping each of their students striving for a whole child approach based on equity and inclusivity. DGS was shortlisted for its wide range of local, national and international projects.

DGS, alongside the winners of the four other categories (Environmental Action, Innovation, Overcoming Adversity, and Supporting Healthy Lives) will share an award of \$250,000.

I am extremely proud of the school and want to pass on my congratulations to all the pupils and staff at the school, and those in the wider community, for this truly outstanding achievement.

4.2 Potential New School for Mull: As part of phase 3 of the Scottish Government's Learning Estate Investment Programme (LEIP) the Council have now prepared and submitted a bid ahead of the 31st October deadline. Our request for part funding of a new £35.5m Campus on Mull will now be considered alongside a number of others from across Scotland. It is anticipated that Scottish Government Ministers will be announcing the successful bids in December 2022.

4.3 Stretch Aims: Our Local Authority Stretch Aims have now been submitted to the Scottish Government. As part of the Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress, published by the Scottish Government in March 2022, all Local Authorities are to develop annual stretch aims to ensure progress is made in recovering from the impact of Covid-19 and align to the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge. The required stretch aims are to be set to improve outcomes for all while closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

The Stretch aims for Argyll and Bute have been developed having regard to all available data, in conjunction with Head Teachers and our link Education Scotland Attainment advisor. A number of consultation events were held to collate feedback to assist in refining the aims.

Five core stretch aims have been set covering literacy, numeracy, school leavers, participation measures, and attendance. An additional aim, which forms part of the 'core-plus' model has been identified and for Argyll and Bute this is focussed on the extensive work being undertaken in respect of nurturing approaches.

The central team will now use established processes to track the progress towards our stretch aims and monitoring will occur in line with data uplifts and publications.

4.4 Argyll and Bute Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework: Work has commenced, in consultation with all Head Teachers, to produce an Argyll and Bute Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework. This framework will outline a clear, shared and ambitious vision for what should constitute high quality learning, teaching and assessment in every playroom, classroom and learning environment in Argyll and Bute. It will set out our aspirations for all children and young people and will place responsibility on everyone who works in the service to meet the needs and ambitions of all.

The framework will empower and encourage practitioners to be flexible, creative and innovative and help to ensure that there is a level of consistency across every establishment and the authority as a

whole. It is envisaged that a draft will be available by mid December 2022.

4.5 Head Teacher Meeting: The start of this session saw the service hold the first in-person Head Teachers meeting since February 2020. The session focussed on the theme of using education to improve outcomes for children and young people and reduce the poverty related attainment gap. The day centred around three workshops – Argyll and Bute Stretch Aims, Pupil Equity Funding and Moderation. Consultation took place with regard to the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework and the process of School Reviews. Feedback from the day was very positive with 98% of respondents rating the day as ‘good’ or better, with 41% rating the day ‘excellent’. All feedback received will be used to inform the next in-person Head Teacher’s meeting on 30th November.

4.6 Parental Advisory Group: Patrick McGlinchey (Executive Director, Connect) attended the recent Parental Advisory Group meeting to present to Parent Council Chairs in relation to the benefits of Connect. Connect are an independent charity who support parental engagement in education and offer a range of training and advice to local authorities, parent councils, and parents/carers across Scotland. Patrick will also be linking in with the Head Teachers meeting late November to ensure that all our schools are aware of the benefits to them and their Parent Councils.

Cheryle Burnett from National Parent Forum Scotland (NPFS) also attended to assist us with achieving greater consistency in our communication lines with Parent Councils, including reviewing the process for setting up email accounts.

4.7 Violence Against Women and Girls Project: In line with the above project, the development of School Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) remains an ongoing priority for the service. Capacity building sessions took place at end September for those schools already involved and initial training will be held for new schools engaging with the programme at end November. The service have extended their partnership working and capacity on this project by engaging two Youth Engagement Officers from Police Scotland and Argyll and Bute Rape Crisis. One of our teachers will also be undertaking training to become a MVP Trainer to build further capacity and support across the local authority, ensuring that the programme is sustainable.

4.8 Argyll and Bute Trauma Conference: Planning continues for the *Building a Trauma Responsive Workforce* conference at the Queens Hall, Dunoon on 16th November. The aim of this conference is to ensure that across all services careful consideration is given to national practice, making sure that collaboration and relationships are at the heart of everything we do, recognising and responding effectively to trauma. There are 160 delegates signed up to attend the conference from a wide range of stakeholders including Health, Social Work, carers, Education, young people, Third Sector/Charity groups, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, and Children's Hearings Scotland.

4.9 Developing the Young Workforce (DYW): Argyll and Bute DYW continues to work closely with schools, employers and partners to ensure the best work-based vocational learning opportunities for our young people, and to support the employability curriculum across our schools. The team of DYW Co-ordinators continue to initiate and develop links between schools and employers, which have resulted in increased and more bespoke work-experience opportunities for young people, and increased employer engagement in careers events in schools.

At the recent Quarterly Review with the Scottish Government, the number and breadth of DYW Argyll and Bute's initiatives with schools and employers were commended, with the request that practice within Argyll and Bute be shared across other Local Authorities.

4.10 Secondary Attainment Meetings: The autumn Attainment Meetings between Education Management, the Executive Director and school leaders are currently underway. A new approach to these meetings has been formulated to analyse all aspects of attainment and achievement in individual secondary schools. An increased focus on high expectations and how schools are maximising opportunities for all learners, regardless of circumstance, ability or place, is challenging and empowering schools to improve curriculum and attainment in their own contexts. Feedback from Head Teachers has been positive and appreciative, and the process will be evaluated fully to ensure maximum effectiveness and impact.

4.11 Early Years Team: During this term the team have been busy pushing forward with strategic priorities around building Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) staff knowledge and understanding around the rights of children, as they are enshrined within the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The team have also been delivering training to settings around positive behaviour management strategies, in response to local and national awareness of the impact upon Covid

lockdowns on young children's developmental progress around attention, regulation and speech and language development.

The Childcare Purchase pilot on the Isle of Bute continues, which is looking at how we can make best use of current staffing within Rothesay Joint Campus ELC to support working parents of non-eligible 2 year olds. Whilst small in size, it is anticipated that this pilot, and the simultaneous childminder recruitment drive on the island, will help bridge the 0-3 childcare gap on the island, following the closure of a partner provider by Care Inspectorate.

A similar venture is planned for Tiree, as this is another area where there are currently gaps in the availability of childcare for working parents of our youngest children.

4.12 Enhancing Literacy Skills for those with Additional Support

Needs: Argyll and Bute has continued to improve leadership opportunities for Support staff in line with recommendations from the Scottish Government's Additional Support for Learning Morgan Review (2020).

Eight LGE7 posts have been created for Lead ASN Assistants (Literacy Enhancement) – two within each of the four geographical areas. These posts will:-

- Assist schools in meeting the support needs of targeted groups to enhance outcomes and attainment in relation to literacy;
- Improve engagement with education through the use of assistive technology
- Develop effective support mechanisms using assistive technology for children/young people and staff to remove barriers
- Upskill staff working with children/young people using assistive technology to support literacy difficulties
- Build relationships between home and school to support learning
- Track and monitor progression in literacy

It is also recognised that there is a need to extend quality training and the use of assistive technology to ensure that it is used in a more consistent way across the authority. This will help to reduce and remove barriers for children/young people with literacy difficulties

The Service also aim to recruit three Lead ASN for Care Experience Attainment between October and December 2022. Successful applicants will secure a fixed term contract from January until October

2023. These posts will focus on raising attainment at Broad General Education (S1-3). The current Health and Wellbeing Liaison Officers will continue to support children and their families as previously.

4.13 Celebrating Success and Continuous Improvement:

Kilcreggan Primary School have achieved a Digital Schools Award for their work in embedding digital technology in learning and teaching.

During lockdown, staff at Kilcreggan worked hard to make learning as engaging and interesting as possible through the creative use of technology, and they have continued to pursue this digital practice. To ensure continued improvement, staff, parents, pupils and the wider educational community were consulted, with their feedback being used to identify any gaps and areas for development.

I would like to congratulate the school for their hard work and dedication. They are worthy winners of this national award, which promotes, recognises and encourages a whole school approach to the use of digital technology in schools.

Oban High School (OHS) – I would like to wish Jodie Hoey, a Science Teacher from OHS, the very best of luck when she competes at the Commonwealth Powerlifting Federation Championships in New Zealand, which take place from 28 November to 4 December. Jodie only started powerlifting during lockdown so it is a tremendous achievement to be representing your country on an international platform just 2 years later. She is a great role model and an inspiration to all the young people that she teaches at OHS. I look forward to hearing how she gets on later this month.

5. POLICY LEAD FOR ROADS AND TRANSPORT - Councillor Andrew Kain

5.1 Introduction:

Since my last report, I have continued familiarisation with the Roads and Transport brief and council officers. As previously stated; with Argyll and Bute covering such a large and diverse area the Roads and Transport services confront significant challenges in delivering. As well as roads, the Service covers ports and harbours, ferries and airports. There is 2,300 Km roads (40% on islands) of varying standards across the second largest council, by area, in Scotland. So all of this presents some significant challenges for officers in their striving to deliver best value to the people of Argyll and Bute. This is particularly now a test to achieve and maintain high standards with hugely reduced resources.

I have also taken steps to progress important relationships across Argyll and Bute, nationally and through HITRANS in order to benefit future delivery of infrastructure and communications; particularly across our islands.

5.2 Major projects:

The following are in different stages of delivery and will contribute hugely in improving the economies and welfare of the communities they serve.

Campbeltown flood defences: a significant project newly underway which will greatly reduce the flood risk in the town while improving the resilience to the changing climate.

While there is some disruption as a result of construction, all will be made good by the contractor with significant benefits delivered for the future. There is a useful page on the Council website providing details about the works. This project has a value of over £15M with Scottish Government Flood Prevention Scheme funding 80% and the Council 20%.

Elected Members have received a presentation on the works and have conducted site visits and are engaged with the service and community in determining detail. The three local councillors have had an additional workshop session with officers to progress options for the reinstatement of Burnside Square following the installation of an underground water storage tank which will occupy much of the footprint of the square. They met again with officers on Tuesday 8th November on the site. Works are well underway on the ground and good progress is being made. Regular updates are being posted on the council web site detailing progress and upcoming sections of work.

Oban Harbour: A hugely significant programme that is advancing well and which will greatly benefit the economies of Oban, the Islands and Aquaculture businesses across Argyll and Bute. Establishing Oban as a Municipal Harbour is close to being delivered and the council has engaged with over 1,000 stakeholders. I remain engaged with members of OCDHA who are fully behind the development, indeed their insistence on detail continues to benefit the process. While the complexity and enormous number of moving parts make it impossible to satisfy every view, the unifying objective, on which all parties agree, remains to deliver a 'Harbour Revision Order' to Transport Scotland by end of year which will be endorsed; and which will lead to an enhanced safety environment across Oban harbour. Then on to the next phase where, with the help of OCDHA and other stakeholders we can ensure the effective management and commercial success of

Oban Municipal Harbour. Good progress is being made with the summer Navigational Risk Assessment informing the harbour limits and consultation feedback being used to finalise the draft Harbour Revision Order prior to these being formally considered by the Harbour Board next month.

The council also remains committed to reviewing options for extending the North Pier to deliver greater capacity.

Winter cover: The Council has a statutory obligation under Section 34 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984, to – “take such steps as it considers reasonable to prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads”. In the Council area, which by definition includes carriageways, footways, footpaths, pedestrian precincts, etc. Our Roads and Infrastructure team have recently issued to Members a detailed briefing setting out how the winter policy is delivered. Treating the council’s road network through the winter period is a complex logistical operation and the briefing provides a clear overview of this process. I look forward to working with officers and overseeing this process in the coming months.

The service has in place a plan as delivered in previous years with the objectives of: ensuring the provision of a standard treatment appropriate to the prevailing weather conditions and; establish patterns of working which will produce the greatest benefit from the deployed resources, with the view to reducing the level of risk and the extent of any delays to the public, caused by adverse weather conditions.

Home to School Transport: The council transports some 3000 school children between home and school each day. With the recent train strikes additional bus services have had to be provided to ensure that children can be adequately transported when the Oban and Helensburgh trains have not run. I am pleased to be able to report that successful arrangements have been put in place to replace trains which have not been available.

Roads Capital Programme: The majority of the roads capital carriageway programme has been delivered through the summer months. The teams are now turning towards delivering the various footway schemes and good progress is being made.

Qualifying Factors: As has been previously stated (and obvious) the current economic environment is not consequence free for Argyll and Bute and the Service. The inflationary pressures across the board will impact all aspects and create significant cost increases. The cost of all materials remains high! However, the Service is doing what it can to

mitigate the effects by such as, combining with other authorities to improve purchasing power, route optimisation, and everything in its power to maintain effectiveness with greatly reduced resources. We shall also be looking for community support in prioritising services.

Future: It is my intention to continue familiarisation within brief and further developing relations with officers as we jointly look to develop policy and maximise resource delivery for the benefit of all residents of Argyll and Bute. I will also be looking to enhance relationships, where I can, with agencies and organisations that contribute to, are associated with, the delivery of services to Argyll and Bute. If you have any issues or suggestions on how we can further mitigate pressures and improve services please feel free to contact me directly.

6. POLICY LEAD FOR CARE SERVICES – Councillor Amanda Hampsey

6.1 Primary Care:

From 5th September to the time of writing, teams have given 57,574 vaccinations. That means around 50% of the entire eligible population in Argyll and Bute have received their winter vaccines in line with the Scottish average. All consenting care home residents have been vaccinated.

The Vaccination programme is on track to complete the programme before 5th December, ahead of Government timescales.

There are some continued dental clinic closures due to Covid and patient access is being supported.

The Helensburgh Sexual Health clinic is reinstated, and work is ongoing to develop a service in Cowal as a priority. In addition, a full scoping exercise is underway to identify provision levels in Argyll and Bute as set against the national standards for Sexual Health.

6.2 Health and Community Care:

Winter Planning is now in place and plans have been submitted to the Scottish Government for assurance. Ongoing response support is on a weekly basis supported by the leadership 'huddle'. Meetings on delayed discharge meeting are in place which will strengthen the interface with the acute pathway to NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde to support positive outcomes for patients and alleviate pressures across the system.

Wider resilience planning is undertaken as a multi-agency approach through the Local Resilience Partnership in line with recommendations.

The HSCP is communicating the Right Care Right Time, Right Place approach to support communities to access the right service at the right time.

Care at Home continues to be pressured with a focus on the mitigating actions around recruitment and retention and supporting independent providers.

The place based approach to service delivery is in its inception looking at the needs led approach and facilitating a multi-agency approach.

Staff support over the winter period continues to have priority with some in-person full team meetings having been held and further sessions in the planning.

6.3 Children, Families and Justice Services:

The review and renewal of the Children's Services Plan and the Children's Rights Report are both due in spring 2023. The next Children's Services Plan will run from 2023 to 2026.

The service has given feedback on the 'Bairns Hoose' draft standards. We do want to consider their application in remote and island settings and have requested the equalities impact assessment which is in progress.

Revised vetting standards for Justice Workers have been postponed and developments will now coincide with a new national offender management system due in 2024.

6.4 Mental Health:

The HSCP has recently commissioned Support in Mind Scotland to deliver Distress Brief Interventions in Argyll and Bute. The initial focus has been on awareness raising and training partner agencies, including Scottish Ambulance Service, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue, the local authority and General Practitioners, so that they are able to refer people to this service. This work is in line with the national program.

The HSCP have recruited to the Associate Lead Nurse post for Mental Health, with the preferred candidate joining the team in the next three months. This role will enhance the Partnership's senior management

team and will have a specific focus on clinical and care governance and practice development across all mental health services.

The Scottish Government's Improving Mental Health Team visited mental health services in Mid Argyll on 26th October 2022. The team undertook a walk around of the inpatient facility in Succoth Ward and participated in a drop-in discussion session for staff from across the service.

6.5 Learning Disability and Neurodevelopmental conditions

Work is also ongoing to review and expand local core and cluster models in line with national policy (Coming Home Report).

In February last year the Scottish Government allocated a £20 million Community Living Change Fund to Integration Authorities via NHS Boards to:

- Reduce the delayed discharges of people with complex needs.
- Repatriate those people inappropriately placed outside of Scotland.
- Redesign the way services are provided for people with complex needs.

Our allocation of this is £300,701. Our two key intentions are to use this money to:-

- Employ a project manager on a fixed term contract for 18 months to review the care and support needs and arrangements of those currently placed outwith Argyll and Bute and to develop local pathways to support as many as possible to return home.
- Support staff to undertake Positive Behaviour Support Qualifications and become PBS Champions.

The Head of Service visited NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde's LD Inpatient services on 5th November. They were introduced to the Project Manager who supports their action plan in respect of the Coming Home Report and the Community Living Change Fund. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde's Project Manager has offered to provide support and guidance to the Argyll and Bute Project Manager once recruited and in post.

In addition NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde have set up a Learning Disabilities Collaborative and have the Chief Executives of the largest third sector organisations participating and leading on the subgroup work streams. The aim of these work streams is to support the development of specialist service provision, facilitate repatriation of people to their localities, ensure value for money and develop new models of care that are underpinned by evidence based practice.

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde has invited Argyll and Bute HSCP to join their collaborative and participate in this work. It is hoped that this will enhance opportunities for the people of Argyll and Bute who have a learning disability and will enhance our working relationship with NHS GGC.

We continue to developing a business case to support the development of a Neurodevelopmental Pathway for Argyll and Bute. This will be a joint venture between the Children and Families and Adult services.

7. POLICY LEAD FOR PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES – Councillor Kieron Green

7.1 Introduction: Since my last report I have chaired regular Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee meetings that took place in September and October, the Argyll and Bute Licensing Board in November, and several of the Local Review Bodies which have been convened. I have also attended a Clyde Regional Marine Planning Partnership meeting where increased community representation was considered.

7.2 Development Management: With the Central Validation Team operating at full capacity the time taken to validate planning applications has been reduced. This had reached 19 days in August, but by October been brought to under 10 days although this is still above the target of 5 working days.

Time to determine applications continues to rise however, and has now reached an average of 15.6 weeks compared to the target of 11 weeks. Issues with capacity and resilience of the service remain due to staff vacancies and unplanned absence, preventing a return to pre-pandemic performance of between 8 and 10 weeks.

Received planning fee income for 22/23 to date is £1.049m compared to a full year budget of £1.369m. Of this, £231k has come from major applications, and a further £150k from Section 36/37 submissions, which may require additional resource to process as recruitment to this team has not been successful.

Feedback from the Scottish Government for the Planning Performance Framework 11 is expected by early 2023.

7.3 Development Policy: Work remains ongoing to progress development at Dunbeg with the new A85 junction subject to a traffic impact assessment required by Transport Scotland, amendments to the Lorn Arc Tax Incremental Financing being pursued with the Scottish Government and an Economic Impact Assessment underway.

The 'Strategic Delivery and Development Framework' for the Faslane Maritime Change Programme is continuing to advance with discussions regarding a shared blue light services centre, and a survey of demand from the base to be actioned by the Royal Navy.

The Simplified Planning Zone in Lochgilphead, which aims to make it easier for people wishing to build their own home has been advanced with the former primary school now demolished.

7.4 Building Standards: Income from Building Warrants to the end of September was £589k, which is £82k over budget and includes continued processing from East Lothian and Dundee Councils.

A number of dangerous buildings are being monitored by officers across Argyll, who also responded when a vehicle went through a residential property.

7.5 Regulatory Services: Following Short Term Lets policy approval by Council recruitment of a new team to issue licenses has commenced. While this is underway existing officer resource is being prioritised to process applications for new properties, as these require a licence now, with existing accommodation having until the end of March 2023 to have a licence applied for. Consideration of Planning Control Areas, and a coordinated approach with Lomond and the Trossachs National Park have been the subject of Steering Group discussions.

Outbreaks of avian influenza continue nationally, principally in England. There are no reported cases or outbreaks in Argyll and Bute, and reports of dead bird carcasses washed onto our shores have reduced. The situation is being monitored by the animal health team with updates provided through the council website.

After lobbying by local authorities, the Scottish Government sought approval from the UK Government for piloting remote property inspections for the Ukrainian Resettlement program. Argyll and Bute is now one of three authorities in Scotland that are part of this, which is using a risk based approach to reduce resourcing requirements where appropriate.

Measured Local Air Quality in Argyll and Bute is again good with levels of pollutants well below that set out in standards. However NOx levels have increased as transport usage returns to that seen before COVID.

8. POLICY LEAD FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICES - Councillor Ross Moreland

8.1 Introduction:

Following my first Policy Lead report presented to Council at the end of August, I continue to meet with officers on a monthly basis, to discuss a range of services within the Council, from waste management to grounds maintenance and cemeteries, as well as climate change.

8.2 Waste Management:

At my most recent meeting on 1st November, I met with the Executive Director, Head of Roads and Infrastructure, the Fleet, Waste and Transport Services Manager and the Performance Manager for the Waste Service. Our discussions focussed on matters relating to waste, and the Waste PPP Options Appraisal report which has now been produced. Officers have prepared a detailed report which is on the agenda for the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee, scheduled on 1st December 2022. Officers have also arranged a Members Seminar on 17th November, to take all Elected Members through a range of detail and proposed next steps.

8.3 Grounds Maintenance:

With the winter months approaching, the grounds maintenance team have their final schedule of grassing cutting cycle taking place. Officers were also involved in a range of maintenance for the Remembrance Sunday events, which took place across Argyll and Bute.

8.4 Climate Change:

Officers reported a downward trend across the Council in terms of our annual carbon emissions footprint. The most recent national statistics show we have reduced our footprint by a third over past the past six years, which is fantastic, but there is no room for complacency or deceleration. Officers continue to monitor this activity and all departments across the Council, including us as Elected Members, have a responsibility to play in monitoring and reducing our carbon emissions.

The Council's Decarbonisation Plan was adopted in 2021 to support and align to the 'green recovery' from the pandemic and much progress has been made to delivering climate commitments. The De-

carbonisation Plan sets a three-year framework to continue our climate journey and routemap to net zero.

Officers are continuing to work with partners of the Community Planning Partnership and other Public Bodies in terms of producing a regional Adaptation Plan and scientific based net zero routemap.

Addressing Climate Change is a global issue that is hugely reliant on partnership, collaboration and the actions of us all. No single organisation can tackle it in isolation and as a Council we need to show clear leadership and lead by example in all that we do.

As Policy Lead with responsibility for Climate Change, I have joined the Council's Climate Change Board. The Board is chaired by the Head of Commercial Services, and has representations from services across the Council, looking at how the Council will meet its obligations by 2045.

8.5 Carbon Literacy Training:

Along with several colleagues across the chamber, I have also had the pleasure of undertaking the Carbon Literacy Training delivered to small cohorts of councillors by Argyll Coast and Countryside Trust (ACT).

These training sessions focussed on the science behind climate change and what we can do ourselves to act on climate change both at a personal level as well as at organisation level.

This training was intensive and incredibly useful and I would strongly encourage any fellow councillor who hasn't already done the training to find out more about future sessions. It involves two separate sessions, working in small groups, with an assessment exercise to complete. Participating in this training strengthens our overall carbon literacy and climate change aims and activities and I recommend it to colleagues as a highly worthwhile exercise.

9. POLICY LEAD FOR ISLANDS AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT- Councillor Liz McCabe

9.1 Islands:

Scottish Governments Islands Infrastructure Fund

After the successful application to this Scottish Government fund for £100k project to establish Digital Hubs on the Islands of Islay, Iona, Coll and Tiree the first two public drop-in sessions were supposed to have taken place but have had to be postponed due to adverse weather conditions. Both visits were due to include representatives from the

NHS 'Near Me' Team and Councils Telecare Team. Further dates are yet to be organised. However with these cancellations highlights the importance of digitally enabling remote island communities.

Islands Programme 2022/23 – total allocation £740,000

Two out of the four bids were successful with our total award being £350,000 for:

- Island Community Halls Digital Hubs – Islay, Iona, Tiree and Coll - £100,000 IP grant request. This represents 100% of the costs.
- Tobermory Seawall and Railings project - £250,000 IP grant request. Total project costs is £450,000, remaining £200,000 being requested from PBI and CE 2022/23 allocation

Islands Programme 2023/24 – yet to be confirmed

Scottish Parliament – Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee (RAINE) have been undertaking a review of the IP and particularly the introduction of the competitive process as opposed to the direct award to councils as was the case for the 2021/22 allocation. The Chief Executive was invited to provide evidence to the committee.

Link to the Committee's website:

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/current-and-previous-committees/session-6-rural-affairs-islands-and-natural-environment-committee>

Scottish Government Carbon Neutral Islands Project – Islay

Community Energy Scotland has been appointed by the Scottish Government to act as the lead at the local level with regard to all 6 pilots.

Local steering groups are being set up, the Islay group is being supported by Islay Energy Trust (IET) until a project officer is appointed and they will sit with IET. The first piece of work is the collection of data and production of a community climate plan.

9.2 Business Gateway:

COVID-19 Response: Members will recall from my previous report that two new business support schemes were launched in May, using the Local Authority COVID Economic Recovery funding, administered by the Business Gateway team.

The Small Business Development Grant 2022 provides grants to existing businesses of up to £3,000 (75% of eligible costs). 74

applications have been received. 55 approved, 9 rejected, 3 withdrawn and 7 pending. £54k remains available (18 awards).

The Business Start-up Grant 2022 provides grants to new start businesses of up to £3,000 (paid in 3 instalments). 49 applications have been received. 42 approved, 4 rejected and 1 pending. Just under £30k remains available (10 awards).

Both funds are expected to be fully subscribed before Christmas.

£35,000 of the Sector Support Grant funded by the Local Authority Covid Economic Recovery fund has been used to provide start-up or development grants in Dunoon, Campbeltown or Bute, in line with the objective that the fund is targeted at the areas of greatest need. The remaining £115,000 will be used by the Projects and Regeneration Team for the pilot premises top-up scheme.

Business Gateway Local Growth Accelerator Programme (LGAP): Programme of business support worth £855,239, leveraging £524k of EU Structural Funds. Due to the conclusion of the EU Structural Funds programme, this will close shortly. The deadline for new registrations is 5 December 2022 and 30 January 2023 for applications for grants or specialist advice.

The programme continues to show a positive impact. Follow up work to date with 113 recipients of support shows that their combined turnover has increased by more than £9.1m (48%) and employees by 127 (42%) since registration, despite the pandemic.

Claim 5 has been submitted for expenditure of £156,794. This is currently being verified by the Scottish Government.

Total committed spend to date is £727,711 (85% of target), comprising

- £644,919 grants
- £59,379 specialist advice
- £23,413 marketing

DigitalBoost: This programme of digital support is funded by the Scottish Government and delivered via Business Gateway. The budget for 2022-23 is £25,488.

To date 5 in depth digital expert help sessions (50% of annual target) and 33 one hour surgeries (47% of annual target) have taken place.

Business Growth programme pilot: Participant feedback on this pilot of intensive one to one coaching and group sessions was positive. A second cohort of the programme will take place in 2023-24.

Framework Agreement for the provision of specialist advice to businesses: Scoping work has begun to identify the requirements for a new tender, to replace the current Framework that expires March 23.

Key stats - Business Gateway Support:

- 344 enquiries handled
- 322 business adviser meetings
- 204 existing businesses supported with one to one advice
- 67 new start-up businesses supported
- 24 one hour expert help surgeries (13 Finance, 4 HR, 4 exporting/importing, 3 Marketing)
- 175 attendees at webinars
- 92% customer satisfaction

9.3 Employability Team Activity:

Fair Start Scotland: (for 16 to 67-year-olds) - 15 additional starts have signed up to Fair Start Scotland, bringing the total to 324 participants since the service commenced (69 Helensburgh, 75 Campbeltown, 37 Rothesay, 58 Dunoon and 85 Oban). Key Workers have supported a total of 111 people into work. 78 of these job starts have occurred during the COVID-19 period.

PeoplePlus continue to set targets, in October we over achieved our start target of 10 finishing on 12 starts. Of these starts, five were JobCentrePlus (JCP) referrals and seven were achieved due to the marketing work carried out by the team. We also achieved eight job starts to finish top partner out of the five partners in the Highlands and Islands.

We continue to complete the Marketing Action Plan detailing the activity carried out to promote the service. One of our Keyworkers attends the fortnightly Resettlement Group meetings, as such we are seeing quite a few Ukrainian refugees receiving support from Fair Start Scotland. This cohort of participants are extremely keen to move into employment.

Argyll and Bute Employer Recruitment and Training Incentive (ABERTI): (for 16 to 67 year olds) - Applications for this fund ceased at 31/03/22. A total of 37 participants and 28 employers were supported. To date 32 participants have completed the 52 week funded period or left early, 25 (78%) are in employment. 18 (72%) of which retained by the employer accessing the funding and seven (28%) have moved to another employer. The remaining five continue to do well in their subsidised employment.

No One Left Behind - Employer Recruitment Incentives (ERIs) 25+ Years: Applications are invited in respect of the ERIs of up to £6,000 per person.

This allows unemployed people aged 25+ years the opportunity to move into permanent or a fixed term employment contracts of up to 18 months or more.

This funding has attracted four employers who have recruited a total of six employees utilising this funding. It is encouraging to note two of these employees are aged 60 years plus. A further four places remain. Our Employer Engagement Worker continues to promote this funding.

No One Left Behind – Pre-employment support: Up to 30th September 2022, 56 participants aged 25+ have been supported by the pre-employment support delivered by our LEP partners. Of these, six are now in employment either on permanent or temporary contracts and two are self-employed. The whereabouts of five are unknown and the remainder continue to be supported.

Twelve participants have achieved recognised / accredited training and qualifications.

The next partner quarterly return covering 1st October 2022 to 31st December 2022 is due on the 14th January 2023. This return will again provide updated figures in relation to positive destination and participant's whereabouts.

A further grant allocation of £228,017.65 in respect of 22/23 is available.

Parental Employability Support Fund (PESF) - 16 to 67 year olds: Delivery of PESF continues to go well. This service is funded by the Scottish Government and designed to support low income families to increase their income through work, both through supporting parents to access paid employment and in helping those in lower paid jobs to progress to higher income.

Our two part-time PESF Engagement Workers deliver intensive in and out of work employability support, including person centred support to upskill, apply for jobs, gain progression whilst employment, money advice, health support, motivational support, etc. A total of 62 parents have now joined the service.

Approval to accrue all 21/22 underspent monies to 2022/23 has been

granted by the Cabinet Secretary and the Memorandum of Understanding received.

A further grant allocation of £149,219.53 in respect of 2022/23 is now available.

The Young Person's Guarantee - 16-24 year olds: A total of £1,153,570 has been received from the Scottish Government between 20/21 and 21/22.

Approval to accrue all 21/22 underspent monies to 22/23 has been granted by the Cabinet Secretary and the Memorandum of Understanding received.

Of the 62 young people, 62 completed their waged opportunity or left before their 26 week anticipated end date. A total of 51 (82%) are in positive destinations; 39 (63%) have remained in employment with the same employer post subsidy, ten (16%) have moved into sustainable employment with another employer and two (3%) are attending college or school. The remaining 11 young people (18%) are currently unemployed or their whereabouts is unknown.

Third sector interface (TSI) Argyll & Bute is supporting 27 participants, of which 25 have started and successfully completed volunteering placements. Three participants have moved into employment and one into a modern apprenticeship.

Up until 30th September 2022, the three Local Employability Partners appointed have successfully delivered Pre-Employability Support to 133 young people, 36 are in employment, three have progressed into a modern apprenticeship, 14 are carrying out volunteering, four returned to school and five have entered into further education.

The next partner quarterly data return covering 1st October 2022 to 31st December is due on the 14th January 2022 and will provide updated figures in relation to positive destinations and YPG participant whereabouts.

Argyll and the Islands Community Led Local Development (CLLD) Fund: This has been provided by the Scottish Government as a replacement for the previous EU rural development fund LEADER. It is part of the Scottish Government's CLLD programme. The delivery will be overseen by the Argyll and the Islands Local Action Group (LAG) and will be administered Argyll and Bute Council as the Accountable Body. The principles of bottom up, partnership, integration, innovation, co-operation, networking, and area-based approaches will apply to the

fund. The CLLD Fund was launched on Friday, 30th September and closed to applications on Sunday, 23rd October. The newly established Argyll and the Islands CLLD Local Action Group will meet on Monday, 7th November to assess all the projects using a scoring matrix to decide which projects will be in receipt of CLLD monies. All projects must commit and spend all the funding by the end of March 2023 (very tight timescales).

9.4 Digital:

Reaching 100% (R100): An extra £36M has been allocated to the R100 programme due to an additional overall investment from the Scottish and UK Governments as well as the supplier BT. £6M is going to the South Lot and £30M going to the North Lot. This additional funding will add 1,448 premises to the current contract and is targeting islands, two of which are in Argyll and Bute. Mull is in line to get 63, bringing their total to 897 and Tiree are in line to get 98, bringing their total to 467. However due to this additional build the contract has been extended to 2028. A deployment plan with indicative build dates is to be provided in the coming weeks.

Argyll and Bute Council's Digital Exclusion Fund: We are about to provide funding of up to £40k to The Kerrera Development Trust to extend their Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) network to cover the remaining premises on the island to enable businesses and residents to order a Superfast Broadband connection if they desire. We are waiting on the Grant Funding Agreement to be returned allowing the project to commence.

Scottish Governments 4G Infill Programme (S4GI): This is a £28.75M Scottish Government Investment into mobile infrastructure to improve rural mobile 4G coverage. Argyll and Bute currently has two active masts with five in build stage and two in pre-build stage. Our two active mast are at Glenbarr and Bendoran on Mull, both with service being provided by EE, the latter is currently subject to an upgrade which will see Vodafone and Virgin O2 extend their 4G coverage on the island. An additional two sites on Mull are also being upgraded by this operator with service being available imminently.

Shared Rural Network (SRN): This is a £1bn investment programme with £500M coming from the UK Government targeting Total 'Notspots' (no service 4G from any operator) and £532M from the four Mobile Network Operators (MNO's) targeting Partial 'Notspots' (4G coverage by some but not all operators). This investment will see a significant geographic coverage improvement, with coverage from one operator increasing from 74% to 91% and coverage from all operators increasing from 21% to 74%.

Current Stats (03/11/22)

- 94% of Argyll and Bute premises are connected to the fibre network
- 85.4% can access speeds >30Mbps
- 0.8% are between 24 and 30 Mbps
- 2.6% are between 15 and 24 Mbps
- 1.9% are between 10 and 15Mbps
- 5.9% are between 2 and 10Mbps
- 3.4% are below 2Mbps
- Full Fibre availability is currently at 4.9%

9.5 CHARTS:

CHARTS have successfully recruited a part-time Gaelic Culture Heritage and Arts Officer to input into delivery of CHARTS projects. CHARTS were also successful in their £40K application to the Scottish Government Rural and Islands Futures Division to grow creative networks on the islands by supporting youth opportunities and entrepreneurship. Creative individuals and organisations will be encouraged to develop new initiatives such as heritage trails and to develop innovative visitor experiences. A series of opportunities will also offer learning experiences for young people. The programme will include digital events featuring experts that will encourage the pooling of resources and knowledge.

As part of the project, a new Islands Officer role will be created and recruitment is being progressed. This new post on the CHARTS staff team will consult arts and heritage practitioners and voluntary groups to promote and support development for island communities, with the aim of increasing interest in the region's valued island culture.

9.6 CARS and THI Funding:

Rothesay TH: Following on from Rothesay THI (2011-2016), Rothesay TH is the largest of the four programmes, and is due to complete on 31st March 2023, by which date the combined investment made to the town centre of Rothesay will be £7m. Rothesay TH is funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic Environment Scotland, Argyll and Bute Council (£300k), Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Smarter Choices Smarter Places and LEADER. Work is ongoing to see the comprehensive repair of the final priority building at 69-71 Victoria Street, which is category C listed and in need of substantial repair.

Work at the existing priority building at 1 Tower Street/37 Victoria St is expected to be completed in November.

Dunoon CARS: Dunoon CARS is a £2m programme, due to complete on 31st March 2023. Dunoon CARS is funded by HES and the council (£500k). Tenders are in for the final priority building at 106-110 Argyll Street and they are over budget so we are currently working with partners and the building owners to bridge the shortfall. If successful we hope to start works on site in November.

Lochgilphead CARS: Lochgilphead CARS is a £1.8m programme in its third year. Lochgilphead CARS is funded by HES, the council (£400k) and Private Sector Housing Grant (£186k). Work has started on the first priority building and the second building is at tender stage. Progress is being made with the remaining two priority buildings.

Helensburgh CARS: Helensburgh CARS is a £2.4m programme in its second year. Work is ongoing to progress priority buildings, meetings have been arranged with CARS Officer and architects. Small repairs grants and shop front grants scheme – two shop front grants have been applied for and training events have also taken place, the latest one being Historic Building Recording.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1** 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 – 14th November 2022

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