

SINGLE AUTHORITY MODEL - UPDATE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 A report was tabled at the Policy and Resources (P&R) Committee held on 11th May 2023, which provided an overview of the emerging public sector reform and associated legislation that was likely to result in fundamental changes to how public sector services are delivered and how decisions are made. This included proposals to pursue options for a Single Authority Model (SAM) for Argyll and Bute and the P&R agreed that:-

- i. There be further exploration of the options for a Single Authority Model for Argyll and Bute; and*
- ii. Exploratory discussions with the Scottish Government be commenced and that the Chief Executive seek inclusion in the Single Island Authority meetings already in train.*

1.2 This paper provides Members with an update on the progress that has been made in terms of exploring options for a SAM for Argyll and Bute and the engagement that has taken place to date with the Scottish Government (SG) and other key partners.

1.3 It is recommended that members:-

- Note that the SG have formally advised the Council that Ministers welcome our involvement in discussions on Single Authority Models;
- Consider the ongoing engagement and collaboration with key partners to develop suitable options, as set out at 4.3 and 4.4;
- Note that a further report will be prepared for P&R Committee following the completion of work to articulate the benefits and key objectives associated with each option.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Following approval by Members at the P&R Committee held on 11th May 2023 to undertake preliminary discussions with the SG, the Chief Executive wrote to the Director for Public Sector Reform, who has confirmed that Ministers would welcome the involvement of Argyll and Bute Council in looking at alternative local governance models, which will potentially bring a range of benefits to communities across the area.

2.2 This reports provides an update on the collaboration that has taken place in the interim period and what the next steps are.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that members:-

- Note that the SG have formally advised the Council that Ministers welcome our involvement in discussions on Single Authority Models;
- Consider the ongoing engagement and collaboration with key partners to develop suitable options, as set out at 4.3 and 4.4;
- Note that a further report will be prepared for P&R Committee following the completion of work to articulate the benefits and key objectives associated with each option.

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 Argyll and Bute is made up of a rich mix of remote, rural and island communities, which present a number of unique challenges in terms of service delivery. In recognition of the demographics and geography, and the emerging public sector reform, we are making a shift in public sector structures through increased collaboration and joint working. However, there is a need to build on this in order to address the challenges we face and to realise the full potential of the area, via a whole system approach such as a SAM.

4.2 Public sector service sustainability in Argyll and Bute requires a multi-agency integrated model, a variety of hyper local delivery models, robust infrastructure,

and the coordination of planning and commissioning for the longer term, which supports public sector organisations to meet their legislative and public duties.

4.3 Since the P&R Committee in May 2023 the Council have been engaging with a wide range of key partners on the concept of a SAM, including:-

- Scottish Government – engagement with senior civil servants to date has been positive. Ministers have now formally agreed that the Council can participate in relevant meetings arranged by the SG including the Islands Engagement Group;
- Information and development sessions have been held with:-
 - elected members – P&R, Policy Leads/ELT
 - Leadership Development Session – Council/HSCP/NHS Highland senior representation
 - Integrated Joint Board and Development Session
 - NHS Highland Board – Strategy and Development Session
 - NHS Highland Executive Development Group

Engagement with all key stakeholders will continue as the proposals for a SAM in Argyll and Bute are developed.

4.4 In terms of next steps, the following key actions will be progressed over the coming months:-

4.4.1 A review of all relevant legislation pertaining to each of the potential options will be undertaken by the Officer Working Group set up to oversee this work, to fully understand the potential technical/legislative implications.

4.4.2 The SG have asked us to undertake further work in respect of the potential benefits that alternative local governance models could bring for the people of Argyll and Bute. For example, shared corporate services, place based approach, adoption of a preventative model, development of a bespoke health and care strategy which meets the unique needs for the area, improved outcomes for our communities etc... This work will be undertaken in collaboration with key HSCP and NHS Highland colleagues, with an initial workshop scheduled for mid-December. Once the key benefits/objectives have been developed, this will provide a basis on which to fully appraise each of the potential options.

4.4.3 Liaise with the other Island Authorities involved in developing SAMs, including Western Isles and Orkney Councils, to identify any shared learning opportunities as part of this process.

4.4.4 Engagement in workshops to be arranged by the SG to progress SAMs, in consultation with other local authorities.

4.5 A further report will be prepared for a future P&R Committee following the progression of the above actions.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Following engagement with senior civil servants within the SG, the Chief Executive has had confirmation that Ministers would welcome the involvement of Argyll and Bute Council in looking at alternative local governance models, which will potentially bring a range of benefits to communities across the area.
- 5.2 Officers have been engaged in ongoing discussions with the SG and have participated in a number of information and development sessions with key partners such as HSCP and NHS Highland to develop our thinking around what a SAM could look like for Argyll and Bute. A number of next steps have been set out at 4.4 above, including a review of the relevant legislation and development of the key objectives and benefits driving this work, to enable an appraisal of options to be undertaken.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy; currently none but with the potential for significant implications due to emerging national policies.
- 6.2 Financial; none at present - exploration of a SAM will consider any financial implications arising.
- 6.3 Legal; a review of all relevant legislation will be undertaken as part of the development of any options for a SAM
- 6.4 HR; none at present – as the proposals develop there may be a requirement for additional resource to support this work.
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty: none
 - 6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics; none
 - 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty; none
 - 6.5.3 Islands; none
- 6.6. Climate Change; none.
- 6.7 Risk; failure to explore options for the best model for our communities and influence the national development of reforms.
- 6.8 Customer Service; none.

Pippa Milne - Chief Executive

Councillor Robin Currie – Leader of the Council

16 November 2023