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29<sup>th</sup> April 2026

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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. The previous update was provided to Council on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2025.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the report.

**3. POLICY LEAD FOR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT – Cllr Math Campbell-Sturgess**

- 3.1 **Introduction:** This report provides a strategic overview of activity within the Business Development service, highlighting key progress, emerging risks, and areas requiring political awareness.

The service continues to manage a substantial and complex portfolio of regeneration, economic growth, and employability programmes, with a cumulative value exceeding £100 million across multiple funding streams.

Recent months have seen strong progress across delivery programmes, alongside growing strategic concern regarding future funding gaps, particularly in relation to UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) replacement funding.

### **3.2 Regeneration and Capital Investment:**

- Successful outcome at Regeneration Capital Grant Fund (RCGF) Stage 2, with four projects approved:
  - Kintyre Seaports (£800k)
  - Tarbert Harbour Watersports Hub (£850k)
  - Tighnabruaich Refuelling Hub (£120k)
  - Nonhebel Park (£648.5k)
- Continued progress on Luing Slate Quarry, with contract awarded (subject to subsidy control process).
- Helensburgh CARS (£2.4m) is nearing completion with multiple buildings progressing and repair grants issued.
- Tarbert Heritage Programme funding package confirmed (~£2.5m total), enabling delivery of a five-year scheme.

### **3.3 Tourism and Infrastructure:**

- Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF) projects progressing well, with several now complete (e.g. Staffa access works, the Port Ellen motorhome facilities that I visited with officers last year).
- Continued development of Strategic Tourism Infrastructure pipeline with no direct council capital requirement.
- Ongoing support for Clipper Round the World Race.

### **3.4 Creative Economy and Events:**

- Continued delivery of Strategic Events and Festivals Fund, with strong economic impact.
- CHARTS funding secured (£95k) with expanded Gaelic and cultural programming.
- Film activity increasing:
  - 8 enquiries recorded
  - 4 large-scale productions scheduled
- Growing engagement with national cultural partners (e.g. National Galleries, Venice Biennale legacy work).

### **3.5 Business Growth and Support:**

- Strong performance from our Business Gateway-supported businesses:
  - Turnover increased from £23.3m to £29.4m (+26%)

- Employment increased from 287 to 385 (+34%)
- High satisfaction metrics maintained (national top-tier performance).

### **3.6 Employability:**

- Scottish Government funding has been confirmed:
  - £1.26m for 2026/27 (No One Left Behind programme)
- Improved staffing resilience (returning to two keyworkers).
- Positive outcomes from placements:
  - Increased progression into employment
  - Continued steady referrals and programme uptake

### **3.7 Community-Led Development (CLLD):**

- 2026/27 allocation confirmed: £560,849 (increase year-on-year).
- Earlier funding confirmation improving delivery timelines and applicant support.
- Strong engagement across communities (high anticipated demand).

### **3.8 Digital and Connectivity:**

- Broadband coverage improving:
  - Full fibre now at 29.06% availability (up from 28.19%).
- Continued rollout of Island Digital Hubs Phase 2.
- Progress on mobile connectivity via Shared Rural Network (Islay improvements delivered).

### **3.9 Key Risks and Challenges:**

#### Loss of UKSPF Replacement Funding

- Confirmation that no replacement funding will be provided for at least 3 years.
- Significant risk to:
  - Business grant support
  - Digital advisory programmes
  - Employability and economic growth interventions
- The Council has issued a cross-party response to UK Government, with media coverage.

- Strategic Risk: Potential structural reduction in economic development capacity unless alternative funding streams are secured.

#### Programme Wind-Down Pressures

- UKSPF transition programmes must conclude by September 2026.
- Risk of:
  - Reduced support continuity for businesses
  - Loss of momentum in economic recovery initiatives

#### Infrastructure Delivery Constraints

- Delays to broadband rollout on Colonsay due to land/wayleave issues.
- Ongoing dependency on external partners (Openreach etc.).

### 3.10 Emerging Opportunities:

- Defence Growth Deal funding now included in regeneration portfolio.
- Increased interest in film and creative sector activity.
- Strong pipeline for island and community-led projects, aligned with population retention priorities.
- We also have potential to leverage:
  - Cultural partnerships capitalising on our rich history which links into
  - Tourism infrastructure investment
  - Digital innovation funding (e.g. SWAN, BT engagement) as our region continues to punch well above our weight

## 4 POLICY LEAD FOR CARE SERVICES – Cllr Dougie McFadzean

- 4.1 System Pressures - Delayed Discharge:** The Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) continues to face a number of significant challenges, with two of the most pressing being ongoing system pressures—particularly delayed discharges—and our current financial position.

Levels of delayed discharge do remain high. I recognise and sincerely thank staff across the system who are working tirelessly to address this through a coordinated, whole-system, multi-disciplinary approach. This work brings together acute services, community teams, social work, care providers and partner agencies, recognising that no single service can resolve this issue in isolation. The shared focus is on improving patient

flow while ensuring individuals receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

I also want to acknowledge the impact that delayed discharge has on people who are ready to leave hospital, and on their families. Our priority is to support individuals to return home, or move to the most appropriate community setting, as soon as they are clinically ready. Reducing unnecessary hospital stays not only improves individual outcomes, but also helps relieve pressure elsewhere in the system.

As an HSCP, we recognise the importance of prevention. We are therefore seeking to strengthen work upstream to reduce avoidable admissions. Anticipatory care planning, increased access to community nursing and allied health services, and stronger links with primary care will all play a key role in supporting people to manage long-term conditions more effectively. While there is still much to do, our whole-system approach aims to build a more resilient health and social care system across Argyll and Bute.

**4.2 Financial Position and Budget Setting:** Following the IJB meeting on 28th January 2026, a formal budget engagement process was undertaken and concluded on 12th March 2026. I would like to thank everyone who took the time to contribute to this important exercise. A report detailing the outcomes of the consultation was presented as part of the budget-setting papers at the IJB meeting on 25th March. Also at the March meeting, the Integration Joint Board (IJB) approved a budget of just over £430 million for 2026–27 at its meeting on 25th March 2026. This budget was the outcome of several months of detailed work, involving extensive engagement with key stakeholders and multiple consultation exercises across Argyll and Bute.

Regrettably, some extremely difficult decisions were required, and a number of services will experience reductions in funding during the coming financial year. The reality is that we did not have sufficient resources to protect all previously funded commitments. I would like to thank fellow elected members for supporting the allocation of additional funding to the HSCP, which helped to mitigate some of the most challenging savings proposals presented during the budget development process.

Despite this, significant financial pressures remain. I want to highlight the recently published Integration Joint Boards Financial Bulletin 2024/25 from the Accounts Commission, which reinforces concerns regarding the long-term financial sustainability of IJBs. The bulletin notes that growing demand continues to outstrip increases in funding and achievable savings, requiring difficult decisions around service redesign, reduction or

discontinuation. It also emphasises the importance of transparency with service users and the public about the potential impact of these decisions. The challenges faced by Argyll and Bute are mirrored across Scotland, and we will continue to work hard to deliver services within the resources available to us.

- 4.3 Service Developments and Achievements:** I am pleased to confirm that the HSCP has received Scottish Government funding to establish a GP walk-in clinic at Cowal Community Hospital, due to open in June 2026. This 12-month pilot aims to provide greater flexibility in access to primary care and ensure patients are seen by the most appropriate clinician at the right time.

Our Technology Enabled Care team continues to make excellent progress in supporting the national transition from analogue to digital telecare services. To date, 87% of clients have been successfully transferred—a significant achievement as we work towards the national deadline of January 2027.

The Bairns' Hoose facility in Helensburgh continues to go from strength to strength. In November 2025, a second wing was opened, providing additional therapeutic spaces including counselling rooms, health and meeting spaces, and a family room with a separate entrance. This development further enhances the safe, child-centred support available to children and young people following interview.

Partnership working is also being strengthened through collaboration with West Dunbartonshire, with whom we share a Police Division. Through this arrangement, interviewer resources are shared, interviews can be conducted at our Bairns' Hoose facility, and resilience within teams is improved. West Dunbartonshire also brings a commissioned third-sector organisation to provide post-interview support, which will include access for children in Argyll and Bute. The Bairns' Hoose model reflects Scotland's adaptation of the Icelandic "*Barnahus*" approach, offering holistic support to children who have experienced abuse or harmed behaviour.

- 4.4 Workforce and Community Highlights:** We held our first Child Health Whole Service Development Day, bringing together allied health professionals, school nursing, health visiting, community children's nursing and child protection colleagues. The event was a great success and highlighted our shared commitment to collaboration, learning and continuous improvement.
- I am delighted to report the permanent appointment of Dr Jen Coyle as salaried GP at Carradale Practice, ensuring a stable and sustainable service for the Kintyre community. I also wish to congratulate Jean Cairns

of Arrochar GP Practice, a finalist in the People's Choice category of the 2026 RCN Scotland Nurse of the Year Awards, in recognition of her compassion and longstanding service to the community.

- 4.5 Health Improvement, Safeguarding and Fundraising:** The HSCP's Health Improvement Team recently delivered the *"Draw It Out, Talk It Out"* youth mental health art project across Argyll and Bute. The initiative promoted positive mental wellbeing, reduced stigma and encouraged early conversations, with excellent feedback from participating youth groups.

Eadar Glinn Residential Home in Oban successfully hosted a Fire Walk fundraising event, raising £7,593 to support resident activities and wellbeing initiatives. This remarkable achievement demonstrated strong community spirit and commitment.

The Adult Support and Protection Day, held on 20 February 2026 and supported by the Adult Protection Committee, helped to raise awareness of the importance of safeguarding adults at risk of harm and highlighted our collective responsibilities.

Finally, I am pleased to acknowledge Aileen Gillies, who has raised over £20,500 for the Macmillan Unit at Mid Argyll Hospital and Integrated Care Centre. Her ongoing fundraising efforts will directly enhance patient care and services locally, including the purchase of specialist equipment.

## **5 POLICY LEAD FOR CLIMATE CHANGE, RENEWABLES, NET ZERO AND GAELIC – Cllr Luna Martin**

- 5.1 Climate Change Plan Consultation Response:** The council's statutory response to Scotland's Climate Change Plan 2026-2040 consultation was considered and approved at the Special Council meeting held on 29th January 2026, and subsequently submitted to the Scottish Government. The response drew contributions from a wide range of Council service areas including Finance, Roads and Infrastructure, Customer Support, Commercial Services, Community Planning, and Education - coordinated through targeted briefings and an MS Forms collection process. Thanks to everyone who contributed to the 30-page response.
- 5.2 Scotland's Climate Change Plan 2026-2040 - Now Published:** The Scottish Government published the finalised Climate Change Plan 2026-2040 in March 2026, following the large-scale public consultation which attracted over 500 responses from local authorities, businesses, the third sector, community climate groups, and members of the public. As detailed

above, the Council submitted a formal statutory response to the consultation in January 2026.

The plan is structured around carbon budgets for three five-year periods: 2026-2030, 2031-2035, and 2036-2040, working towards Scotland's overall net zero target by 2045.

For Argyll and Bute specifically, the plan's "place-based approach" is particularly relevant. The Scottish Government has committed to tailoring delivery to local social, economic, and environmental needs, rather than a one-size-fits-all model. This is an important signal for island and rural council areas where infrastructure challenges, delivery distances, and community structures differ significantly from urban settings.

The publication of the plan also provides the policy context against which Argyll and Bute's own Carbon Management Plan 2026, which is currently in development, will be positioned. More detail on this below.

### **5.3 Public Bodies Climate Change Duties - Statutory Guidance**

**Published:** Alongside the Climate Change Plan, the Scottish Government has published final statutory guidance for public bodies on their climate change duties under section 44(1) of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. This replaces the 2011 guidance and is a significant development for the council. The three duties remain:

- to act in the way best calculated to contribute to emissions reduction targets;
- to help deliver the Scottish National Adaptation Plan; and
- to act in the most sustainable way.

The new guidance is more detailed, practical, and comprehensive than its predecessor. It explicitly requires public bodies to develop a climate change strategy with net zero targets, implement a carbon management plan or equivalent, and develop action plans with interim steps, costs, timescales, and dependencies. It also expects bodies to work toward a decarbonisation pathway aligned with the national carbon budget periods. For the Council, this guidance directly validates and reinforces the work currently underway on the Carbon Management Plan 2026.

Officers have reviewed the new guidance in detail and are developing a briefing for the Climate Change Board on the implications for the council's governance arrangements and reporting obligations.

- 5.4 Carbon Management Plan 2026:** Development of the Carbon Management Plan 2026 is well advanced. Narrative content across the key sections is substantially complete. The plan will replace the technical Net Zero Route Map with a more accessible document. It is anticipated that an initial draft will be presented to the Climate Change Board in April, prior to being shared more widely for consideration.
- 5.5 County Yard Carbon Assessment:** A carbon assessment was completed for the County Yard redevelopment in Lochgilphead using the PAS 2080 standard (British Standard for carbon management in infrastructure). The key outcome of this exercise was the identification of a 45% reduction in embodied carbon was through design iteration, reducing the baseline from 995 to 549 tCO<sub>2</sub>e.
- 5.6 Taynuilt Primary School:** The Drax-funded solar PV installation at Taynuilt Primary School is progressing. The contract has been awarded to Gensource of Musselburgh and installation is on track for the Easter school holidays. This will be a positive, concrete example of council-delivered renewable energy infrastructure at a community building.
- 5.7 Education and Young People:** Primary schools are signing up for the Keep Scotland Beautiful Climate Ready Classrooms programme, taking place in March 2026. Keep Scotland Beautiful are developing a programme for multi-composite classes (P1-7) to run alongside the established P6/7 programme. Five pupils from Hermitage Academy will attend the KSB national Youth Forum in March.
- 5.8 Climate Ready Region - Argyll and Bute:** The Climate Ready Region initiative, being developed by the Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership with support from the Waterman Group consultancy, is progressing toward a final business case, which is expected in April 2026. The project aims to develop and fund an Argyll and Bute Climate Ready Region partnership, following models established elsewhere in Scotland including Climate Ready Clyde, Climate Ready Tayside, Highland Adapts, and Climate Ready Aberdeenshire.

The Climate Ready Region initiative connects closely with Argyll & Bute's focus on capacity building - identified as a particular priority for this area given the scale and rurality of the region.

**5.9 ABCAN and Community Climate Action:** The Argyll and Bute Climate Action Network continues active community-level engagement across the region. Activities include delivering free accredited carbon literacy training, facilitating climate conversations, providing seed funding for community projects, and engaging with hard-to-reach groups. The network maintains four local engagement leads across the administrative areas of the region. Carbon literacy training is also continuing for council officers.

**5.10 Gaelic:** I have picked up the chair of the six-weekly Gaelic Policy Lead meeting, which includes officers from all services in the council with an impact on or responsibility for Gaelic. This meeting considers national activities and progress, engagement with other partners involved in Gaelic, updates on service-related actions – the activities from the Furan Gaelic Centre in Oban, the work of the Gaelic Development Worker and Gaelic Partnership, Gaelic Education, Gaelic Culture and economic activity.

Current priorities include the preparations for the fifth Gaelic Gathering to be held in the Corran Halls on Friday 15th May 2026, where we have a range of speakers lined up. This is historically a popular event, allowing for a focus by all groups and organisations interested in Gaelic in Argyll and Bute to share their work, interests and future plans.

The new council Gaelic Language Plan is due to be submitted to Scottish Ministers in December this year, so the Gathering will be the ideal place to open engagement with local Gaelic stakeholders on this important document. The draft plan will be brought to Community Services Committee in August for consideration before going on to Policy and Resources and the Council for final approval. We continue to work closely with Bord na Gaidhlig on this to ensure compliance with legislation.

The Scottish Languages Act 2025 is also a focus for us at the moment, particularly on Areas of Linguistic Significance. The Council now has a duty placed on it to formally consider the designation of Areas of Linguistic Significance for areas in Argyll and Bute that meet the threshold of 20% or above Gaelic speakers. We have a commencement date of 1st September to begin a 12-month period of official consultation on which areas could be designated and whether or not the Council will recommend

designation. We have established a working group with local Gaelic Organisations to plan this and are also working with other Councils who also have that duty placed on them by the Act. This underlines the importance of partnership working and ongoing engagement as part of our role.

## **POLICY LEAD FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING AND CORPORATE SERVICES – Cllr William Sinclair**

- 6.1 Introduction:** This is my first report following my appointment to the role of Policy Lead for Community Planning and Corporate Services. I would like to acknowledge the contribution of Cllr Mark Irvine, who previously led on this portfolio, and to thank him for all his hard work and effort.
- 6.2 Governance:** Work on the Scottish Parliamentary Elections on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2026 is progressing well. The nomination period closed on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026 with seven candidates being validly nominated for the Argyll and Bute Constituency. There are also 18 Parties/Individuals on the Highlands and Islands Regional List. The Notice of Poll was published on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026 along with the situation of Polling Places and agent information. Poll Cards were issued in the week commencing 16<sup>th</sup> March 2026. The next major milestone will be the issue of the Postal Voting Packs from 15<sup>th</sup> April 2026 which will then kick-start postal vote openings. Staff appointments have now been issued and the training module is live and will be available to staff from 8<sup>th</sup> April 2026. The Election Team is continuing to meet and is progressing with transport, communications and other arrangements.

Following the decisions made at the Budget we are progressing the work to put in place a mechanism for distributing the £50k allocated to each Area Committee. We will also be taking a report to Council which details how the additional £20k allocated for Community Councils will be distributed.

### **6.3 Legal Services:**

#### Judicial Review

The Council was successful in the recent Judicial Review in regard to the Tobermory Campus Project. The judgement was clear in its terms and concluded:

- The decision is challengeable
- There was no challengeable failure to undertake further enquiry about an offer received

- There was no obligation to consult; such failure would not give rise to conspicuous unfairness but even if there was such an obligation, the consultation was adequate.
- There was no procedural unfairness in the vote of 7th March 2025.

The Council has now successfully defended both the Helensburgh and Mull JRs with the Court of Session finding entirely in favour of the Council.

**6.4 Resilience:** In light of the ongoing situation in the Middle East, the Council, in line with the nation Fuel Disruption Guidance, which sets out a system of prioritising fuel supply and distribution, updated the Argyll and Bute Council Fuel Disruption Guidance Document in liaison with services. There has also been liaison with the UK and Scottish Governments in relation to reports circulating in the media warning of possible fuel shortages due the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. The advice form that is:

Whilst we are aware of some localised examples of ‘panic buying’, the UK Government has issued assurances that the UK Fuel network remains stable and stocked.”

They have issued this line: ‘Both the AA and Fuels Industry UK have been clear that fuel production and imports are continuing across the UK as usual with no issues being reported.’”

The key messages are:

- The UK remains a net exporter of petrol, producing more than it consumes. No evidence was presented of a strategic or medium-term petrol shortage. Current issues are demand-driven rather than supply-driven.
- Diesel supply is currently considered stable, with Scottish Government expressing confidence in availability.
- No specific concerns were raised regarding agricultural fuel access.
- Jet fuel presents the greatest strategic vulnerability. Heating oil and jet fuel are essentially the same product - Current stock levels are sufficient. Seasonal factors are favourable, with warming temperatures; and reduced summer demand. There is short-term supply assurance.

The Resilience team continue to monitor the position through the Local Resilience Partnership and normal Resilience channels.

**6.5 Welfare Rights:** Income generated through Welfare Rights intervention for 2025/26 was £5,455,778. This figure includes £1,056,825 for individuals and families affected by cancer supported by the partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support and £563,991 for clients referred via the Welfare Rights Advice in Health Partnership project.

Income generated by Welfare Rights activity		Referrals/Clients
Month	Client Gain	
January	£378,864.94	196
February	£422,911.02	177
<b>March</b>	<b>£935,845.34</b> (this figure is higher as an exercise was carried out to close a number of older cases in the run up to year end)	<b>203</b>

Previously, the Welfare Rights service received direct funding from Macmillan Cancer Support to provide an enhanced Welfare Rights Service for people affected by cancer. That funding model will no longer be in place from June 2026. A new framework is being introduced. We are working positively with West Dunbartonshire Council, who are now the lead organisation for Macmillan funding in the south of Scotland. This will help us maintain sustainable funding, allowing us to continue delivering a high-quality service and ensure that this support remains in place for people affected by cancer across Argyll and Bute.

**6.6 Procurement:** The Council's Procurement, Commercial and Contract Management Team (PCCMT) continues to take proactive and compliant steps to ensure that local businesses are given access to opportunities, are supported to bid, and are provided the opportunity to be well placed to succeed in winning Council and wider public sector contracts. This approach is consistent with procurement legislation and reflects the Council's broader commitment to Community Wealth Building, supplier engagement, and SME and Third Sector participation.

Use of Lotting and Contract Design: PCCMT routinely structures contracts to maximise accessibility for local suppliers, including through:

- Lotting contracts by geography and/or specialism
- Using appropriate procurement routes such as Invitation to Quote (selecting a number of bidders to competitively quote) where permissible
- Designing requirements to avoid unnecessary barriers to participation for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and Third Sector organisations

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A clear example of this approach is the Argyll and Bute General Property Maintenance Term Contract, which was awarded in early 2026.

Argyll and Bute General Property Maintenance Term Contract (2026): The contract covers general planned and reactive property maintenance works across a wide range of trades, including (but not limited to):

- Building, joinery, glazing, roofing and plaster works
- Electrical, plumbing and heating works (including distribution and emitters)
- Floor, wall and ceiling finishes and decoration
- Emergency lighting and compliance-related works (including fixed wire testing, legionella compliance, fire alarms and related inspections)
- Housing maintenance works in relation to temporary tenancies
- Potential larger reactive, capital and planned maintenance works
- Potential NHS Highland maintenance works

The contract has an estimated total value of £9 million over a potential four-year term. It was deliberately lotted by geographical area to reflect the Council's geography and to promote local supplier participation. The contract was awarded as follows:

- Lot 1: Cowal – John Brown (Strone) Ltd
- Lot 2: Helensburgh and Lomond – DCF Joiners & Building Services Ltd
- Lot 3: Bute – George Hanson (Building Contractors) Ltd
- Lot 4: Mid-Argyll – MacLeod Construction Ltd
- Lot 5: Kintyre – McKinven and Colville Ltd
- Lot 6: Islay and the Isles – McEachern Bros Construction Ltd
- Lot 7: Oban, Lorn and Mull – Oban Electrical Services Ltd
- Lot 8: Tiree and Coll – CKR Island Construction Ltd

This contract demonstrates how lawful procurement design can achieve strong local outcomes without breaching equal treatment and non-discrimination requirements.

**6.7 Communications:** Over the last few month a number of really informative animated videos have been produced and released on social media detailing the huge scope of what Argyll and Butes Council does and working with the line *“Your Council Tax at Work for You Every Day”*.

In the first two we concentrated on how much out of every £10 is spent on services. Below are the figures for 2025/26:

- Education was £5.25
- Social Work was £2 78
- Environmental Services £0.65
- Roads and Transport £0.50
- Cultural Services £0.27
- With the remaining £0.55 to be spent on all our other services.

Additional videos concentrated on specific services like Education, Roads and Infrastructure, and Health and Social Care.

The team have prepared their most recent video on air and sea travel services, and the fact that these are multi-million pound services that most other councils do not have to deliver.

This season the team are re-vamping the ‘Have a great time, be a great visitor’ campaign. This is our responsible tourism campaign developed in response to local community concerns about issues such as littering.

**6.8 ICT and Digital:** Our ICT team continue to keep busy, ensuring that our online systems are available 24/7 and operating at the highest customer satisfaction levels. The team works hard to ensure the best possible value for money for the systems and software that we use and are part of a public sector consortium to procure high-cost contracts such as Microsoft. The Council is also part of a public sector consortium for our network and the ICT and Digital team has ensured as smooth as possible a transition to SWAN 2 on our new network provider

The ICT and Digital Team are leading on an AI pilot to identify how the Council can make best use of this new technology. Feedback so far is positive, and the results will be available in May.

Cyber security continues to be high on everyone’s agenda given our day-to-day reliance on digital systems to deliver our services. We continue to

keep abreast of national advice and activity to keep our important systems and sensitive information safe.

**6.9 Customer Engagement Teams KPIs:** The Customer Engagement Team KPIs and operational points of note for February 2026:

Total customer interactions in Feb 2026 were almost identical to that of Feb 2025, but with 8% fewer mediated contacts and 4% more digital contacts. There were 4000 fewer interactions overall compared to January, but that is normal as no council tax payments are taken in February.

CONTACT CENTRE KPIs					
1. CSC Calls Received:	6451	(6720)			
2. Calls Answered:	5485	(6619)	Abandon Rate:	(1%)	(1.5%)
3. Handled at 1 <sup>st</sup> point of contact:	87%	(90%)			
4. Auto Switchboard Calls Handled:	1771	(1981)	Success Rate:	(70.8%)	
5. Voice Auto Payments Made:	241	(220)	£ value =	£50,337	(£51481)
6. Emails answered:	2065	(1879)			
7. Digital Contacts Handled:	3140	(2738)			
8. Face to Face Requests Logged:	1782	(1648)	from 983 F2F customers		

The Dunoon Customer Service Point was successfully moved and was only closed for a single day due to the team’s hard work and focus on customer needs.

Registration activity was higher in February this year, significantly from 99 to 134, due to an increase in death registrations.

The Customer Services Digital Team continue to make steady improvements to the use of AI in the already hardworking bots, which allow many of our online customer services to be automated. The most recent development is the ‘Registrar’s Friend’ AI Bot, which uses the very complex National Registers of Scotland handbook as its ‘brain’ and saves our Registrars a considerable amount of time when they require accurate information. The registrar team completed 28 registrations for Glasgow City Council, who had capacity issues. This arrangement is in place with a number of councils where our team pick up their excess demand on an ad-hoc basis.

**6.10 HR and Organisational Development (HROD):** HROD have completed an important Performance Excellence project, which brings all the service KPIs and strategic council performance indicators into one place, making use of the Microsoft software that we have in place and allow wide access to performance information across all parts of the council.

The HROD team have also had a new recruitment policy approved, taking steps to address one of our biggest workforce planning risks. The new policy is based on values-based recruitment, greater flexibility and inclusive hiring practices. Our recruitment statistics show improvement on last year and we look forward to seeing this get even better. The team are also promoting graduate apprenticeships – a great route into work and to gain a qualification at the same time.

The team has also been working on a new Wellbeing Policy. The council continues to face high levels of absence in the workforce, although our survey does show that employees are reporting better wellbeing than 2 years ago. This is a pattern across all councils and national groups are working together to identify best practice, share solutions and improve support.



Finally, the HR team have recently introduced a new HR Digital Helpdesk which provides an easy-to-use front door to HR and OD. Employees can raise a ticket, track their query and be confident that they will be dealt with according to the service standard. The digital helpdesk includes a bot which is supported by AI and uses the technology developed by our Customer Service Centre Digital Team. Feedback from the 300+ queries in the first month has so far been very positive.

## 7 POLICY LEAD FOR EDUCATION – Cllr Kieron Green

**7.1** Introduction: I would like to formally thank my predecessor as Policy Lead for Education, Cllr Audrey Forrest for her leadership and direction over the previous 18 months.

Since I took on responsibility for Education in November, I have chaired meetings of the Community Services Committee in December and March, as well as the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers. I have attended COSLA Children and Young People Board and met regularly with the Education Heads of Service to discuss developments within Argyll and Bute.

### **7.2 School Visits:**

#### Tobermory High School:

I was delighted to see education across the whole 2 to 18 age range in Tobermory, and speak to staff and pupils. I particularly noted the continued reviewing of space to improve social areas for older pupils, incorporate a new learning centre facilitating appropriate integration of pupils with additional support needs in mainstream education, and the retention of community access to the shared on site library resource.



### Campbeltown Grammar School:

The benefits of a new build school were clearly evident in Campbeltown. With an impressive array of opportunities, backed by access to online learning where needed pupils could access a variety of courses to suit their interests and needs. I was shown their new gallery space incorporating exhibits from The Argyll Collection and works by current pupils, for which they were rightly proud. Ever eager to further improve educational experiences the Head Teacher set out plans to better utilise outdoor spaces including areas for pupils to better participate in sports days.



### Salen Primary:

I saw how this schools caters to both pupils from the local area for English Medium, as well as across the north of Mull for those learning in Gaelic. This gives benefits to all with the sharing of key resources as well as separate spaces to best deliver the distinct educational experiences. I appreciated too being given a delicious school dinner of macaroni cheese followed by fruit!



My thanks to all the staff and pupils in each of these schools who took the time out of their days to show their schools, work, and make me feel most welcome.

- 7.3 Education Review:** I attended the launch of the Education Review at Dunoon Grammar School in February. Members will already be aware of the high level themes that have been identified. Work is now underway for groups to develop details behind each of these, to be brought forward for consideration in due course. This will support a timeline of improvements over the coming years ensuring that pupils across Argyll and Bute continue to have access to the best possible education and opportunities.

- 7.4 SEAS26:** This is a science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) based careers event, with a marine theme, which took place in Dunoon. It brought together key employers and organisations including aquaculture, transport, education, the military, and conservation groups to deliver engaging demonstrations, hands on experiences, and information to children in Dunoon. Highlighted were the extensive employment opportunities available in the marine, science and environmental sectors in Argyll and Bute, linking with our commitment to Developing the Young Workforce.
- 7.5 Final Attainment and Achievement Report:** Key successes this year have been an increase in A – C pass rates following appeals for all qualifications, and rising attainment for Levels 4 and 5 in Numeracy. There has been an increase in S4 leavers, in line with the picture nationally, which has impacted number of presentations.

## **8 POLICY LEAD FOR FINANCE AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES – Cllr Ross Moreland**

### **8.1 Financial Services:**

Annual Accounts: The 2024-25 audited annual accounts and audit report were presented to Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2026 and Council on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2026. At that stage the audit was substantially complete and Forvis Mazars advised they were expecting to issue an unqualified opinion. No material changes have been made to the accounts since then and any final presentational adjustments are now substantially complete. The accounts will shortly be signed and uploaded to the Council's website.

The work plan for preparation of the 2025-26 annual accounts was presented to Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2026 which ensures completion of the unaudited accounts by 30<sup>th</sup> June. It is hoped that the completion of the audit will be brought closer to the historic date of 30<sup>th</sup> September but Mazars will provide updates on this position as the audit progresses.

Budget Outlook 2027-28 to 2031-32: The Budget Outlook position, reported to Council on 25 February 2026, outlines a projected budget gap of £10.1m for 2027-28, rising to £28.5m by 2030-31, based on the mid-range scenario. This position will be updated, extended to 2031-32 and reported to Policy Resources Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2026.

At the Council meeting held on 26 June 2026, an approach to the medium term budget was agreed that focused on the development of a five-year savings pipeline. Four themes are being taken forward, as set out below:

- Empowering Communities;
- Increasing Income;
- Right Sizing Council Asset Base; and
- Delivering Services Differently.

Officers have been progressing with developing options for the medium term approach and these will be considered as part of the 2027-28 budget setting process.

As agreed as part of the 2026-27 budget, a Programme Management Office to manage transformation and other major projects will be created during this year with regular progress updates provided to Members.

Revenue Budget Monitoring: The 2025-26 Revenue Budget Monitoring as at 28th February 2026 outlines a forecast net underspend of £0.203m. This comprises a forecast underspend of £0.3m in respect of Council Tax income, offset by a forecast net overspend across services of £0.097m. The services net overspend is largely in respect of a forecast under-recovery of ferry berthing income, offset by a number of smaller underspends including vacancies, lower than anticipated catering purchases and an underspend on school transport.

As at 28th February 2026, the HSCP was forecasting an overspend of £0.174m for the year in respect of Social Work services, due to demand for residential placements within Children and Families and Older People Services, with an expectation that this would be managed from within available HSCP reserves.

Capital Plan Monitoring: The Capital Plan monitoring as at Quarter 3 2025-26, 31 December 2025 was reported to Policy and Resources Committee on 19th February 2026.

As at Quarter 3 2025-26, there was a forecast overspend of £0.166m on the overall approved gross expenditure budget of £221.675m for 2025-26 and future years. This comprises £143k in respect of Lochgilphead Depot Rationalisation and other relatively small individual project budget variances of less than £50k. This overspend is expected to be managed within existing available resources.

The forecast spend had been profiled across 2025-26, 2026-27 and future years, with £66.7m forecast to be incurred in 2025-26. As at Quarter 3, actual spend totalled £33.8m, representing 50.7% of the total forecast for

the year. The profile of forecast spend across 2025-26 and future years will be subject to ongoing monitoring and review, with updates reported to committee.

Increased pressure on Council Costs and Rising Demand as a result of the conflict in the Middle East: Ongoing conflict in the Middle East continues to create volatility in global energy markets, particularly affecting oil and gas prices. Given the region's strategic importance to global energy supply, any disruption, can lead to rapid price increases and wider market uncertainty. These pressures are not confined to energy alone, they also contribute to rising costs across supply chains, including construction materials, transport and essential goods.

Higher energy and procurement costs coupled with increasing demand for services will place additional strain on already constrained budgets. The indirect effects of inflation, such as future years wage pressures and increased contract costs further compound these challenges.

At present the duration and trajectory of the conflict remain uncertain, making it difficult to forecast how long these pressures will persist. This uncertainty limits the ability of the Council to plan effectively in the medium to long term and increases the risks of further budgetary pressures if conditions do not stabilise.

A report outlining key risks and known pressures will be presented to the Policy and Resources Committee in May.

Benefits: Housing Benefit performance has remained strong throughout 2025/26. As at 28<sup>th</sup> February 2026:

- New claims were processed in an average of 12.73 days.
- Changes in circumstances were processed in an average of 3.81 days.

Performance remains within target levels, supporting timely access to financial assistance, helping to prevent rent arrears and contributing to housing stability

Council Tax: As at 28<sup>th</sup> February 2026, the in-year Council Tax collection rate stands at 93.81%, representing a 0.08 percentage point increase compared with the same point in 2024/25. This reflects a stable collection position, with the timing issue reported earlier in the year now fully unwound. Overall performance remains consistent with trends observed throughout 2025/26.

The annual billing process for 2026/27 was successfully delivered, with bills issued from 13th March, supporting early-year collection and customer engagement.

The final outturn remains sensitive to collection levels and bad debt assumptions. The estimated year-end recovery is currently projected to be £300,000 above budget. In line with agreed reporting arrangements, no further in-year forecast revisions will be made, and the final position will be confirmed at year-end.

Second Homes: As at February 2026:

- There are 2,515 second homes on the Council Tax base (no net change since January).
- Total charge for 2025/26 is £8.44 million.
- £8.10 million (95.94%) has been collected to date.
- £4.21 million relates to the second homes levy.

Direct Debit uptake remains strong at 84.29%, supporting ongoing collection performance.

The Council approved an increase in premiums for second homes and long-term empty properties, effective 1st April 2026. Early customer contact has been limited (approximately 35 enquiries), though activity will continue to be monitored as billing progresses. The financial and behavioural impact of these changes will be assessed over the coming months.

Non Domestic Rates (NDR): As at 28th February 2026, 94.41% of NDR billed has been collected, which is 2.14 percentage points lower than at the same point in 2024/25.

Collection performance remains volatile due to:

- The timing and value of Assessor appeal settlements,
- Backdated reductions in rateable values, and
- Resulting refund liabilities.

The ongoing reclassification of self-catering properties continues to affect the tax base, with the full financial impact still uncertain.

Looking ahead, the 2026 revaluation, changes to reliefs (including short-term let licensing requirements), and wider Budget measures introduce significant complexity to billing and collection. The position will continue to be closely monitored as year-end approaches.

Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF): As at 28 February 2026:

- Total expenditure is £521,232, against a Scottish Government allocation of £458,284.
- Demand has increased significantly, with a 14.91% rise in awards compared to the same point in 2024/25.

This reflects continued cost-of-living pressures on low-income households.

Although overall spend remains within budget management arrangements, demand and expenditure are being closely monitored to ensure continued support for those most in need.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP): As at 28<sup>th</sup> February 2026, £1,041,409 of the £1,323,585 allocation has been spent or committed. The revised DHP Policy, approved by Council, supports a more targeted and preventative approach, particularly in reducing rent arrears, and preventing homelessness.

The Scottish Government has announced an additional £9 million of DHP funding for 2026/27, aimed at addressing gaps between Local Housing Allowance rates and market rents for families. While further guidance is awaited, this is expected to introduce additional administrative complexity. Officers will continue to assess implications for local delivery.

**8.2 Commercial Services:**

Helensburgh Waterfront Development (Commercial Area): The Judicial Review decision was issued on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2025. The Court of Session dismissed the petition raised by the Community Council challenging the decision of the Council's Policy and Resources Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2024 to select a preferred developer for the commercial area.

In the interim period officers have re-engaged with the preferred developer, Forrest Developments Ltd, to progress matters. An update report will be provided to an upcoming Policy and Resources Committee, advising on next steps to conclude the sale of the commercial area at Helensburgh waterfront to the developer. The sale will be conditional on the development receiving planning consent and the price of £1.3m is subject to the deduction of agreed abnormal costs.

Helensburgh Leisure Centre (HLC): Good progress continues to be made with the varying steps and actions needed to repair HLC, with regular fortnightly updates being provided. All updates can be accessed on the Council website via the following link:- [Helensburgh Leisure Centre updates | Argyll and Bute Council](#)

Since the previous report in November, a number of key actions have been taken forward including:-

- A comprehensive programme of condition surveys complete – including internal building condition survey, mechanical and electrical condition survey, and fire risk & safety assessments
- Specialist materials successfully delivered ready for construction
- Completion of redesign of the permanent roof structure
- Building Warrant approved
- A tower crane arrived on site on 18<sup>th</sup> March to help lift materials on to the roof for the start of the permanent roof replacement works. As at 24<sup>th</sup> March, 40% of phase 1 was complete.
- Internal works - removal of mirrors from the gym and both studios – with some being relocated to the temporary gym at Helensburgh Library



At present, the roofing works are progressing well and on track with only small number of lost days due to high winds. The internal repairs programme is under development with contractors, loss adjustor and insurer. As more details of the overall programme are confirmed in contracts more information will be shared via the fortnightly updates.

Tobermory Campus Project: Judicial Review – following a substantive hearing in the Court of Session on 13<sup>th</sup> October, the Council received the ruling of the JR on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2026. The Court of Session reviewed the Council’s decision of 7<sup>th</sup> March 2025 to select Tobermory South as the preferred site and move the project forward. The Court of Session concluded that: - There was no failure on the part of the Council in the process it followed, as claimed by those challenging the decision.

In addition, the Court noted that in dealing with the Petition, it had increasingly identified that the decision against which the petitioner truly took issue was the determination that there should be one “like for like” campus for 2-18 education, a decision which had been justified by the Council in relation to financial and educational considerations and which rendered any discussion about the possibility of a split site redundant.

Steps are now being taken to reactivate the project, including the development of an updated project programme and costs plan to allow progression to the next stage of the project. An update report has been prepared for the April Council meeting.

All updates and information in respect of the project can be found on the dedicated webpages [here](#)

**Banking Hub – Helensburgh Civic Centre:** Working with Cash Access UK the Council are facilitating the operation of a temporary banking hub from the Civic Centre, following the closure of the last remaining bank in the town. This is for an initial six-month period with the option to extend the service thereafter.

This new drop in service is vitally important to communities and businesses, offering the continuation of a physical bank service for the area.



## 9 POLICY LEAD FOR PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES – Cllr Gordon Blair

**9.1 Introduction:** I am pleased to present my first report as Policy Lead. I would like to thank, Cllr Kieron Green, my predecessor as Policy Lead for his help and guidance since taking on this role. In addition, I would like to thank committee members for their support and diligence, and in particular officers for their professionalism advising this important committee. The work of our local Review Board meetings is essential in smooth service delivery and colleagues appreciate the importance of this aspect of committee members workload and thanks too to our committee support staff.

Members of the Committee undertaking a site visit in Kilbrannan Sound.



**9.2 Development Management:** Validation of planning application continues to be processed in line with the five-day target. Average determination timescales for householder applications have increased by around one week for FQ4 25/26 compared to the previous quarter, leading to 15 additional applications awaiting determination. Staff leave and availability of back office systems has contributed to this decline in performance. Overall this has resulted in a largely static performance position over the course of 2025/26. However I will be monitoring this closely so that should there be indications of a longer term decline that this can be addressed.

Extensive work is being undertaken to provide both short term support from agency planners to help mitigate staffing pressures in the Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands area, as well as longer term workforce planning to ensure that this team can meet future demands.

Three Energy Consents proposals remain under consideration with a further 14 projects anticipated to be submitted to the Council for comment in due course. A number of extensions have been required in order to consider these, in part due to insufficient and late information being received, which has prevented officers being able to assess these.

- 9.3 Development Policy:** Consultation on five LDP3 topic papers has been underway over April, with further consultations on remaining papers to be completed this year. Work continues on developing the Helensburgh and Oban Strategic Development Frameworks including ongoing engagement events.

Together with Local Place Plans, which are being compiled by communities, these will move LDP3 from the Evidence Report stage to the Gate Check stage where Government Ministers can assess progress. Final drafting and consultation will then follow over 2027 and 2028, leading to final government examination and adoption in 2029.

- 9.4 Building Standards:** Following the tragic fire in a flat in Lochgilphead Building Standards worked as part of a multiagency response which secured the building, reopened the A83 and supported evacuated residents. ACHA now plan further works to repair the flats and enable the road to be fully reopened.

Final income from building warrant fees for 2025/26 is likely to be slightly above budget. This has been boosted by commercial work being undertaken for Fife Council. Nationally the third planned annual increase in building warrant fees will come into effect this April which will support increased investment in the service.

With further government support an additional Area Team Lead position has been funded for a year, and inspection capability has been enhanced through the purchase of drones and IT equipment.

- 9.5 Regulatory Services:** While recruitment remains ongoing, and there is an effort to grow our own workforce through training and qualifications, there continues to be significant staff turnover and vacancies.

Food safety enforcement and inspection works continue locally. At a national level the SAFER project seeks to modernise food law regulation, recognising that the current delivery model is inadequate. Officers are engaged in discussions with Food Standards Scotland, and involving the Society of Chief Environmental Health Officers in Scotland, COSLA and SOLACE around this matter.

- 9.6 Short Term Lets:** With the licensing system now having been in place since 2022 the transition to permanent team arrangements has been completed. With licenses valid for three years reminders for renewal are being sent out on a monthly basis - in the last month 14 new licenses were granted and 11 renewed. Processes for enforcement have been drafted and are aimed to be finalised by June, with officers currently focused on objections, enquiries and inspections.

## 10 POLICY LEAD FOR ROADS, TRANSPORT AND AMENITY SERVICES – CIIR John Armour

**10.1 Introduction:** Since my last report to Council in November 2025, there has been a significant amount of work going on within my policy lead remit, I have tried to capture as much of it as I can, but with such a broad scope, it's not possible to include everything that's ongoing. As always, if anyone has any queries or questions they would like me to pick up, I will be happy to try to assist.

Here are some of the works that have been taking place since my last report.

**10.1 Roads Capital Reconstruction Programme:** Funding for the next two financial years has been agreed at £12.0 million per annum. This comprises £10.0 million per annum of additional funding, alongside the existing £2.0 million per annum provided through the RIS capital block allocation. This agreement provides a clear and stable funding position over the two-year period, enabling forward planning and greater certainty in the development and delivery of the programme.

The agreed two-year funding package will support increased engagement with Members ahead of decisions on the 2027-28 programme. By providing financial certainty over this period, it allows more time for discussion, consideration of priorities and refinement of proposals, ensuring Members are fully involved in shaping the programme before longer-term funding and delivery arrangements are agreed.

**10.2 Project 20:** Project 20 is now progressing into its next phase, with initial engagement activity taken place within the Helensburgh & Lomond area. Meetings have been held with local Elected Members and Community Councils to outline the project's aims, discuss local priorities and gather early feedback. This initial engagement was well received, with constructive discussion and positive participation helping to inform the next steps in the project's development.



Building on this early engagement, officers will now move on to the Cowal area before continuing engagement across the rest of Argyll and Bute. This phased approach will ensure that communities and Members throughout the area have the opportunity to be involved, raise local issues and contribute to shaping the project as it develops. Ongoing engagement

will support transparency, local ownership and a better understanding of how Project 20 will be taken forward across different communities.

**10.3 Play Parks:** The Council received £938,000 from the Scottish Government Play Park Fund to support its portfolio of 31 play parks over the period 2021–2026. By the end of March works were completed on 19 of the 28 play parks, with tenders currently out for a further three at Arrochar, Tarbet and Port Ellen.

The remaining six parks include Ardrishaig (Bayview and KGV), where progress has been delayed pending clarity on a potential £250,000 community-led Sports Hub project, and Sandbank and Glenmorag, where discussions are ongoing regarding community match funding.

Two skate parks, in Campbeltown and Dunoon, are being progressed separately due to their different framework and limited consultation feedback. The Scottish Government is aware that works would not be completed by 31 March 2026 and is content that plans are in place to complete the remaining projects during 2026–27.

**John McAlpine Play Park:** Late 2024 saw the successful completion of a £100,000 upgrade to Tarbet’s playpark, delivered through a very positive partnership between Argyll and Bute Council and the local community. Working closely with residents and community groups, the Council supported the co-design of the playpark to ensure it provides a high-quality outdoor space for children and young people, promoting physical activity, mental wellbeing and enjoyment of outdoor play.



While many people contributed to bringing this project to life, the late Councillor John McAlpine played a particularly significant role in securing the funding and championing the project for the village he cared for so deeply. Following discussions with his family and the local community, it was agreed that the playpark would bear his name as a fitting tribute to his service. I attended the official opening of the John McAlpine Playpark on 16th March 2026 by John's wife Karen and son Sam (see photo above). Despite torrential rain, there was an excellent turnout from the community - a clear reflection of the high regard in which John was held.

- 10.4 Green Aviation Programme:** HITRANS (Highlands and Islands Regional Transport Partnership) asked the Council to provide a letter of support for its funding application to the UK Government's Green Aviation Programme, which aims to accelerate zero-emission aviation while supporting regional connectivity, economic development and net zero objectives. If successful, the funding would support HITRANS' proposed Zero Emission Test and Demonstration (ZATE) project, building on the Sustainable Aviation Test Environment (SATE) programme to deliver real-world zero-emission flight trials across the Highlands and Islands, with clear benefits for remote and coastal communities.

At the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2026 a motion was passed agreeing to support HITRANS in its funding submission to the UK Government's Green Aviation Programme to access funding opportunities designed to accelerate zero-emission aviation technologies while supporting regional connectivity, economic development, and net zero objectives. It was also agreed that I, as Policy Lead, would write a letter to the UK Government's Department for Transport in support of HITRANS' funding submission to its £43 million green aviation programme.

- 10.5 Bin marking:** A public campaign has commenced on the marking of domestic bins. To help ensure a smooth and fair bin collection service and make limited funding go as far as possible, residents are being asked to clearly mark their household bins with their house number and street name.

The Council normally collect one green bin per household, although some homes may qualify for a second bin. Many residents already label their bins, but we are now asking all households to do so, with markings placed on the back



of the bin beneath the handles and clearly visible, particularly during early winter morning collections.

Around 52% of material placed in general waste bins could be recycled, and residents are encouraged to make full use of available recycling facilities, including bring sites where kerbside glass collections are not available. Additional blue recycling bins are free to order, and further guidance, examples and frequently asked questions are available on the Council website or via the Customer Support Centre.

**10.6 Highlands and Islands Airports / HITRANS:** Since my last report I have attended the quarterly meeting with HiTrans and meetings with Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd (HIAL). HIAL have confirmed that Campbeltown, Islay and Tiree airports are programmed for maintenance works during this financial year.

**10.7 Wider A83 Meeting:** I attended a meeting between Bear Scotland, Transport Scotland and the Council where we discussed a range of issues affecting the A83, which is outwith the scope of the Taskforce meeting. At the meeting I highlighted the immensely positive feedback I have received from hauliers following the cutting of roadside scrub. I had lobbied for the scrub cutting programme as the overgrown vegetation was causing significant issues for HGVs.

I am now planning on meeting with local haulier companies to get a shared understanding of issues affecting them throughout the area.

**10.8 Gribun:** It was agreed at the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2026 that the preferred option for making the B8035 at Gribun, Mull, safe to reopen is to scale the rockface at the areas most prone to rockfall. Members agreed to recommend to the Policy and Resources Committee that £500,000 be allocated from Crown Estate funding to carry out this work. The programme is expected to take between six and 12 months, during which time the road would remain closed to ensure public safety.



Ten options were considered, ranging from full stabilisation to signage, with scaling selected as the most effective and proportionate approach in terms of cost, maintenance and delivery timescale. It is also proposed that £300,000 of Crown Estate funding previously set aside for remedial works at Gallanach, which is no longer a priority, be redirected to Gribun, alongside a request for an additional £200,000 from the Crown Estates fund in 2026/27 to be approved by the Policy and Resources Committee.

## **11. CONCLUSION**

**11.1** 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 – 16<sup>th</sup> April 2026**

**For further information 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)**