

## FOREWORDS

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

Reading over the Annual Report for Argyll and Bute Council 2021/22 offers a considerable degree of hope for the future. We are emerging from the demands of the Covid-19 pandemic and looking to focus again on turning our ambitions for the area into reality. And, as we do so, we can draw significant encouragement and inspiration from what this council has delivered over the past year.

Our staff have proved their flexibility, agility and skills when they had to manage the pandemic, deliver new services and maintain an eye on the future. That agility has served the council and its communities in good stead as we shift forward to drive the growth in economy and population that we need to ensure Argyll and Bute's future success. Innovation, striving for excellence, prioritising quality sit behind all of that effort and hard work.

Alongside the sterling efforts of the workforce are key investments in priority issues like connectivity of all kinds, physical and digital; infrastructure; skills development; economic growth; and much more. All of this has been backed up by prudent financial management to enable us to meet challenging budget gaps while minimising as much as possible the impact on services and jobs. We continue to focus on the vital everyday services that our communities value and the needs of the people who live, work and do business here. And we are playing our part in contributing to wider challenges like climate action.

We continue to seek improvement and to learn at every possible opportunity. Like all local authorities there are many challenges to overcome and maintaining that agility is, and will be, vital as we adapt, change and grow in the years to come. But here and now, there are countless examples and success stories of all of this contained within the pages of this report. There are many more successes which happen every day across Argyll and Bute - making a positive difference to local life.

### **Pippa Milne** **Chief Executive, Argyll and Bute Council**

This has been another year of challenge, change and progress.

The most significant activity was responding to the ongoing pandemic and whilst we are learning to live with Covid-19 our dedicated teams have not missed a beat as they've switched their focus back to achieving our shared ambitions for Argyll and Bute.

As CEO I wish to convey my thanks to all staff for their continued dedication during these unprecedented times and in particular my colleagues who have gone the extra mile working very long days over a long period to support our communities. I also want to thank all the volunteers, without their commitment we couldn't have achieved as much as we did. It is this strength of spirit and community which makes Argyll and Bute a great place to live.

As a council we have many roles to play in the success and future of Argyll and Bute, as a major employer, a provider of services, and as a driver of the economy.

We continue to deliver a huge range of services. We continue to progress investment in regenerating our economy. We continue to work, as a council and with our partners, in achieving the goals that will together attract the people and jobs our area needs.

The council will continue to transform how it works to meet future challenges head on.

This report highlights just some of our achievements over the past 12 months, many of which have been achieved in partnership with others, in spite of the pandemic. This is something we take great pride in.

Amidst difficult decisions and change, Argyll and Bute Council remains ambitious for the future of our communities, hard working in delivering services daily that touch on all aspects of our residents' lives, and award winning in standards we are achieving.

## **Financial Statement**

In 2021-22 the budget gap, including previously agreed savings was £0.164m rising to over £28m over a five year period, with decisions made to bridge the 2021-22 gap, reduce future year pressures and protect vital services. Furthermore, when agreeing the 2021-22 budget, the Council committed investment in key Council priorities including:

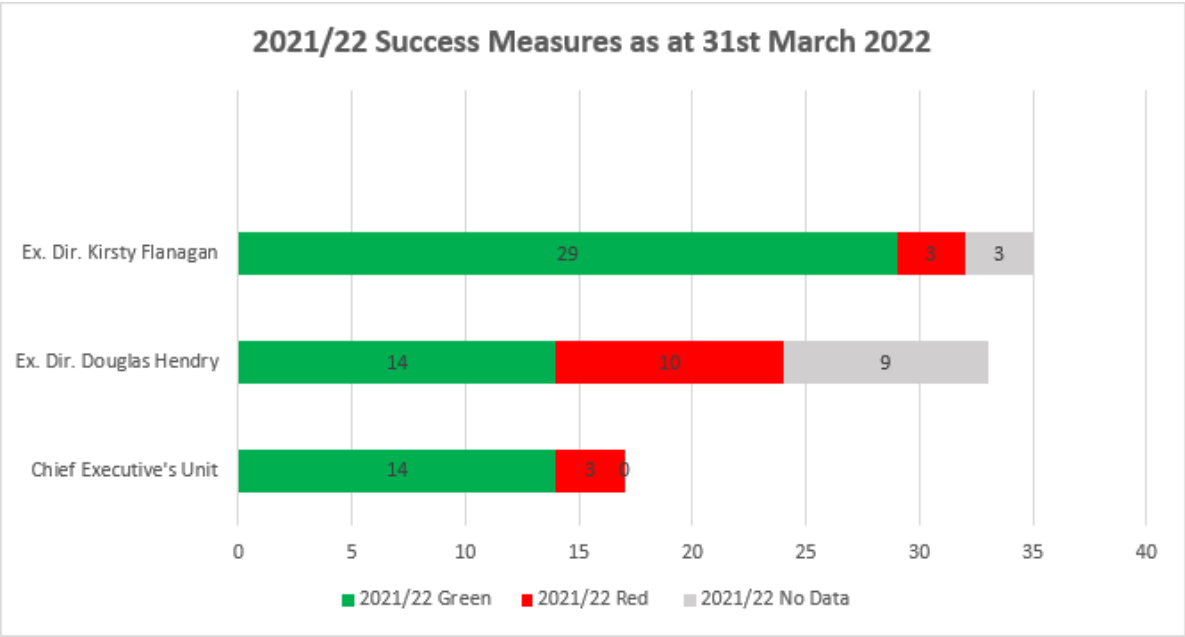
- £2.613m to undertake improvements and repairs to the Roads network
- £0.600m investment in Climate Change Measures to reduce carbon emissions.
- £0.600m Investment in mental health and wellbeing resources and support for vulnerable children and families
- £0.800m to support Staycation investment
- £0.500m for active travel through enhancement/improvement of footpaths and pavements.
- £0.250m to tackle digital exclusion
- £0.172m to provide Welfare Rights Support

Over the course of 2021-22 the Council managed circa £5m in Covid funding to provide financial support to local businesses, the self-employed, childcare providers, vulnerable people and those on low incomes. There was also the provision of free school meals and additional Scottish Welfare and Discretionary Housing Payments.

## **Our Performance**

In 2021-22 we tracked our progress on delivering our Corporate Outcomes through 17 Business Outcomes and 85 success measures which are recorded on the Council's scorecard. Progress is identified using a Red or Green status indicator to track performance. Of the 85 success measures in 2021-22 of which 57 were green or on-track (67%), 16 were red (19%) and for 12 (14%) no data is currently available.

It should be noted that Covid has had an impact not just on our performance but also the ability for collecting and collating data. As a result the status of some measures that are currently displaying red, off-track or no data may change in due course as data becomes available.



DELIVERING OUR OUTCOMES – Our case studies help illustrate the positive contribution the Service has made to our communities and provides examples of good service delivery.

Corporate Outcome – People Live Active, Healthier and Independent Lives

Business Outcome BO101: We Ensure Information and Support is Available for Everyone Choices

**1) Accuracy of registration**

**Success Measure: CSS101\_01-Improve the accuracy rate for registration for our births, deaths and marriages by the council's Registration Service.**

**PERFORMANCE – OFF TARGET**

**TARGET – <2.1% error rate annually**

**ACTUAL – <3.5% error rate annually**

The National Records of Scotland independently audit all council registration services for accuracy of registration and look back on the previous full year. Our target error rate is below 2.1% and the actual audited rate was 3.5%. The pandemic resulted in considerable operational changes for registrars, including the remote recording of Death Registrations, a large number of new Covid related registration regulations to absorb and excess death workloads. All of these additional changes put the service under tremendous strain and to manage the additional workload, a temporary period of 7 day working was introduced. Overall there was a total of 80 errors across 2,315 registration events which was regarded by the independent Examiner as excellent performance. The Registrars successfully

- Adopted both remote digital Death Registration service and virtual Citizenship Ceremonies.
- Adapted the 'Tell Us Once' death notification service for 1,124 customers.
- Put in place a new appointment service for face to face appointments for Birth Registrations.
- Used the [Marriage Website](#), social media and a digital Wedding Diary to inform and accommodate those seeking weddings and civil partnerships.

In the most recent customer Satisfaction Survey, 97% of 127 respondents were very satisfied with the registration service provided. Many of the Registrars were deployed to undertake the pro-active support calls to those customers required to self-isolate by Covid regulations. Between October 2020 and end of April 2022 6,128 self-isolating customers were contacted and offered domestic or financial support. Of these 2,925 submitted claims for the £500 Self Isolation Support Grant. A number were referred to Community Groups for domestic or transport assistance. In November and December 2021 the Customer Service Points/Registration resource also provided emergency assistance to NHS Highland to help them cope with customer contacts regarding the Vaccine Booster Programme. In a four week period they handled 2,738 enquiries for the Vaccination Hub and helped NHS Highland meet its target of having over 80% of over 18 year olds offered a vaccination by the end of December.

## 2) Telephone enquires dealt with on first call

**Success Measure:** CSS101\_03 Increase the percentage of telephony enquiries received by Customer Service Centre that are dealt with at first point of contact.

**PERFORMANCE – TARGET MET**

**TARGET – 43,021 cumulative annual total**

**ACTUAL – 43,936 cumulative annual total**

The Contact Centre agents handled over 152,000 enquiries from customers in 2021/22 and 112,000 were by telephone. The target was to resolve 82% of phone enquires without transfer to the back offices and actual achieved was 94.4%. This allowed operational staff to focus on service delivery with minimal distraction from phone calls.

In addition to this the Council's ongoing investment in 24/7 voice automated services continued to deliver excellent results, with 8,919 customers making automated payments (worth £1.63m). The Coronavirus Helpline was also used 1,501 times in 2021/22.

Contact Centre technology is now being used by both the HR Team and the Scottish Welfare Fund Team, helping them manage call demands more effectively. In 2021/22 a new rolling program of call quality evaluation was introduced, this allows qualitative as well as quantitative management information to be tracked and used for continual improvement.



[Business Outcome BO102: We Provide Support, Prevention and Opportunities to Help People Make Better Lifestyle Choices](#)

## 3) Providing Advice, Assistance and Financial Support Quickly and Efficiently

- We worked with service partners to deliver the redesigned advice service to cope with demand from vulnerable and non-vulnerable clients. Advice and assistance from Welfare Rights is provided to Clients to ensure they maximise their income. We achieved 99.2% of targets despite difficult delivery.
- In 2021/22 a total value of £521,815 in Scottish Welfare Fund grants were paid to support vulnerable people.
- The average processing time for New Housing Benefit claims was 25.19 days and 4.41 days for changes in circumstances. This is against targets of 21 days and 6 days respectively.
- The amount of Discretionary Housing Payments distributed to households in need was £906,187
- We have paid out £269,950 in grants to cover food and fuel for people in poverty and successfully referred them for support to advice agencies.

- The team administered the Argyll and Bute Flexible Food Fund with our partners Bute Advice and Allenergy. The Fund supported 1,007 applicants to achieve financial support totaling £1.324m and were highly commended by the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation at their annual performance awards in the category Excellence and Innovation (Service Delivery).

## Business Outcome BO103: We Enable a Choice of Suitable Housing Options

### 4) Empty Homes

The Empty Homes Officer has an overall remit to assist and encourage owners to bring empty homes back into use with an annual target set and the service continues to grow from strength to strength. Outcomes that have been achieved working in partnership include:

1. Over 500 empty homes brought back into use.
2. An Empty/Abandoned Homes Budget to facilitate and/or instigate action to bring empty homes back into use.
3. First Empty Homes Compulsory Purchase Order concluded. Renovation works undertaken with no financial support and flat leased as a private let.
4. In conjunction with Mull and Iona Community Trust undertook a joint communication exercise with all registered empty home owners on the Island.
5. In Tiree the Hebridean Trust was supported to drive forward plans for the long term use of all their buildings whilst assisting them to bring six listed empty flats back into use. Due to the scale of the scheme a working group of relevant partners was established to take this project forward.
6. Currently working with the Islay Development Initiative to bring two empty flats back into use as affordable housing. This also provides unique opportunity to consider a plug and play model on the grounds of property for additional housing provision.
7. Contributed and shared good practice with a number of Local Authorities and the Shelter Best Practice Group including: development of empty homes grant schemes; new Empty Homes Officer peer support; sharing details on funding mechanisms; and bespoke case management demonstration.
8. Winner of outstanding team and Scottish Empty Homes Conference 2022.

## Corporate Outcome - People Will Live In Safer and Stronger Communities

### Business Outcome BO104: Our communities and supported and protected

#### 5) Covid public health control measures

During 2021/22 National Covid restrictions to businesses and communities were still in place and changed over the reporting year. This placed additional responsibilities on the Environmental Health service to support and enforce standards within businesses to ensure compliance with relevant public health control measures. For example the introduction of the vaccine certification scheme affected some 220 licensed premises in Argyll and Bute. Through a proactive approach, businesses adapted their activities to develop compliance plans or bring their operation out with these requirements in a two-week period.

During this period the Environmental Health team carried out 862 Covid interventions and investigated 773 business enquiries and complaints. Compliance levels were high with 7 formal notices issued. This is excellent performance in challenging times, when they also were involved in the management of Covid outbreaks with NHS Highland and referrals through the Test and Protect regime.

#### 6) Digital connectivity

The Council continues to provide support to the national effort as it continues to improve communication infrastructure across our rural areas. Our cross departmental working continues to play a major role in the successful development of digital connectivity across the area.



#### 7) Active Travel

Active Travel is an overarching term covering journeys made by a physically active means, for example walking, wheelchair, cycling or scooting. During 2021/22 active travel projects totaling £80k from Smarter Choices Smarter Places, £195k from Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, £376k from Cycling Walking Safer Routes and £628k from Sustrans funding were delivered.

#### **8) Increasing effectiveness of groups**

**Success Measure: CPD104\_02-Percentage of groups who say their effectiveness has increased as a result of capacity building the team**

**PERFORMANCE – TARGET MET**

**TARGET – 75.0% annual data**

**ACTUAL – 100.0% annual data**

Groups responding to this annual review positively highlighted successful interaction with the Community Development Team. The community groups had a focus in 2021/22 of delivering Covid impact support to their communities and engaged with the Community Development Team for support and advice. Support included regular meetings, access to the Council's wellbeing service through Health Assured to support resiliency of volunteers and funding advice.

The number of capacity building sessions for 2021/22 was 217, plus a further 65 support sessions as part of the Supporting Communities Fund support to groups and organisations.

Our work to create the right conditions for community groups to be supported, to empower community groups within their communities and in particular in response to Covid was recognised as an example of Best Practice within Audit Scotland's Community Empowerment: Covid report: [Support for local networking: Garelochhead Station Trust's experience during Covid — Communities Channel Scotland \(communityscot.org.uk\)](https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/reports/covid-report-support-for-local-networking-garelochhead-station-trusts-experience-during-covid-communities-channel-scotland-communityscot.org.uk)

#### **9) Training for Community Organisations**

The Community Development Team have sourced and delivered a range of training courses in response to identified needs within communities across Argyll and Bute:

- The Team worked in partnership with the Third Sector Interface in May 2021 to deliver an 'Introduction to Evaluation' online training course to give community organisations tools and techniques to help explain the difference their work makes which is essential for reporting on and successfully applying for funding.
- In August 2021, an online interactive training session was run in partnership with the Council's Procurement Service to help community and third sector organisations learn about how to bid for public sector contracts. This interactive session advised on the tender process, outlined the regulations and gave details of where to look for Council contracts.
- Face to face 'Equality and Diversity' training was successfully delivered for Trustees of Garelochhead Station Trust in March 2022, supported by access to online 'Equality and Diversity' training on the Council's website.
- Delivered training on 'Community Asset Transfer' in partnership with COSS (Community Ownership Support Service) covering the full transfer of ownership, the leasing of licensing and other uses of publicly-owned assets including assets owned by local authorities and public bodies.



## **10) The positive contribution made to our communities and good service delivery - Scotland's Census 2022**

The Community Development Team supported staff from National Records for Scotland (NRS) to reach key population groups who have been identified as requiring additional support to complete the Census. This included those on low incomes, people with disabilities, Gaelic speakers and veterans. The team worked in partnership with Live Argyll and Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface (TSI) to organise and host a specific session for community organisations to support their service users and wider communities.

During the final weeks of the extended census data collection period, NRS identified low return rates on Coll and Tiree. Working with the NRS and community leaders on the islands, occupied properties and holiday rentals or second homes were identified, along with the best ways to reach these groups. Community groups rallied to raise local awareness of the census and ensure the needs of the island populations are represented as fully as possible.

## **11) Covid activities**

During 2021/22, the Community Development Team continued to co-ordinate monthly meetings of the Covid Community Response Groups. These meetings brought together groups who supported the emergency response to the Covid pandemic in their communities, and who have been active in recovery. Members swapped experiences of both tough times and heartening successes, networked and shared practice. The team were able to provide support updates, and respond to requests for information from the Council and Community Planning Partnership, including offering group members' staff or volunteers' access to the Council's 'My Healthy Advantage' app, which offers access to counselling and wellbeing services.

An evaluation of the group showed that members had found it very valuable, reporting that support from the Community Development Team had increased the effectiveness of their organisations and that they in turn had seen an increase in confidence and wellbeing of their service users.

The team also developed and ran a micro-grant fund to meet the needs arising post the summer of 2021. In total 63 Village Halls and community organisations were awarded up to £500 to aid recovery of their facilities or organisations' activities after the Covid pandemic. Applicants demonstrated how their project will help communities to recover from the impacts of Covid with a robust assessment to confirm eligibility and fit with Covid recovery criteria.

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## **12) Support for community engagement with Community Planning Partnership Climate Change group**

The Community Planning Partnerships Climate Change working group consists of community groups and Development Trusts. The group is sharing good practice from community-led climate action across the region.

### [Business Outcome BO105: Our Natural Environment Is Protected And Respected](#)

## **13) Building Standards meets all key performance measures**

Building Standards met all key performance measures in 2021/22 and was one of the few local authorities to introduce the new Building Standards Scotland Competency Framework. The service was successful in obtaining commercial work in vetting applications from Scottish Borders and East Lothian Council although Building Warrant numbers have not recovered to pre-pandemic levels.

## **14) Dangerous Buildings**

The lack of maintenance in private properties has been challenging leading to an increase in reports of dangerous buildings. Building Standards surveyors are required to inspect these properties and where there are risks to the public, take action to remove these dangers.

Any enforcement action can be challenging, particularly where the owners refuse to make immediate repairs, and initiation works in default has been resource intensive. An example is a fire affecting 4 commercial and 1 residential properties in the main shopping area in Dunoon where the Council initiated actions to partially demolish the properties to remove immediate dangers and secure the site. There was continued pressure to clear the site which took some months requiring negotiations with the different owners and insurance companies.



## Corporate Outcome – Children and Young People Have the Best Possible Start

### Business Outcome BO106: Our Looked After Young People Are Supported By Effective Corporate Parenting

#### **15) Success Measure: EDU106\_05-Increase the percentage of our care experienced young people that have the recommended additional tracking and monitoring plans in place.**

All Children and Young People are tracked through the SEEMiS Tracking and Monitoring module.

We established a working party from Education, Social Work, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and the Council's Talent Management Team to look at how we can improve destinations for our Care Experienced school leavers. Information was shared to ensure that Care Experienced pupils are offered the maximum provision of careers guidance. The process highlighted that 2 individuals were not getting the maximum provision and this was rectified.

If a care experienced young person changes school or establishment the Principle Teacher works to support both schools to share appropriate levels of information, arrange transition activities and continues to remind schools of the need to complete the Needs Analysis Tool at the point of transition.

All 100% of pupils presented for Literacy and Numeracy qualifications at both National 4 and National 5 levels were successful.

We are pleased to report that the number of formal exclusions continues to be low and remains below our upper limit of 5. Exclusion guidance has been updated reflecting the language of 'The Promise' and we have made the definition of Care Experience explicit.

### Business Outcome BO107: The Support And Lifestyle Needs Of Our Children, Young People And Their Families Are Met

#### **16) Catering and Cleaning**

The Council continues to offer fresh, healthy and sustainable school lunches and hold the Soil Association Scotland's Bronze Food for Life Served Here award. This award is a widely respected and independently assessed scheme, supported by the Scottish Government. It recognises Councils that serve food made from fresh ingredients, free from genetically modified ingredients and undesirable additives, using free-range eggs, high-welfare meat and source food from the local area so that children benefit from freshly prepared, sustainable meals. The catering team serves 4,300 Food for Life accredited meals a day. In January 2022, P4 and P5 children were included in the provision of Universal Free School Meals.

A new menu compliant with the requirements of the Food and Drink in Schools (Scotland) Regulations 2020 has been implemented. This means our pupils are receiving a nutritious meal, lower in sugar and red meat, with an increase in fruit and vegetables. There are also changes to the permitted products in secondary schools and how the secondary meals are analysed. The new allergen legislation has also been successfully implemented in all our secondary schools resulting in full compliance by the implementation date.

The Beach Café in Oban has opened and is being run by the catering team. This has been a hugely successful operation and has proved popular with visitors and locals as well as offering special catering provision. There is an increase in these events as we begin to emerge from the pandemic.

Argyll and Bute Council were awarded the Footprint Foodservice award for the Community Food Project.

**17) Success Measure: EDU107\_01-Support the increase in the uptake of available Grants, Allowances and Entitlements**

There have been reductions in all three available grants, allowances and entitlements. The application for free school meals shows a reduction of 12% compared to the previous year. This is a direct result of the roll-out of Free School Meals (FSMs) to all P1-P5 children. Families are still applying for FSMs in order to be eligible for the hardship payments paid to eligible families. We are working towards the roll out of FSMs for all Primary aged pupils in line with the Scottish Government.

The total number of School Clothing Grant (SCG) payments processed has reduced by 30, and the number of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) grants processed has reduced by 12. This is the second year in a row that there have been reductions. We continue to promote to all young people over 16, with promotion done as widely as possible through social media channels as well as direct mailing to increase uptake.

**18) Success Measure: EDU107\_02-A counselling service is available in all secondary schools**

In line with Scottish Government expectations, the Education Psychology Service has supported the development of the Counselling in Schools Service. It is led by a skilled and experienced Team Leader and is directed at providing support for children and young people with mental health and wellbeing needs from the age of 10 years upwards.

Since the service started in February 2021 the Counselling in Schools Service has been accessed by more than 350 pupils from all 10 Secondary schools and 24 Primary schools. Common reasons for referral include anxiety, depression, self-harm and relationships. The timing of this service has been critical in terms of responding to the increased need resulting from the pandemic.

Qualitative and quantitative information is gathered to evaluate the effectiveness of counselling sessions. Young people who engaged with counselling reported a positive impact with an 18% reduction in pre and post scores. On the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, young people reported a 27% reduction in pre and post scores. The service has recently expanded with a further two counsellors joining the team on a temporary basis funded from Council Covid recovery funding.

The evaluation of counselling in schools is led by the Education Psychology Service. Moving forward consideration is being given to how this service delivers and enhances the suite of mental health support for children and young people. The views of young people themselves will be critical to identify any gaps in service provision.

## Corporate Outcome - Education, Skills and Training Maximise Opportunities for All

### Business Outcome BO108: All Our Children and Young People Are Supported To Realise Their Potential

#### **19) Continuing To Support All Our Children And Young People**

Across Argyll and Bute 37% of children currently assessed up to December 2021 are achieving stage 2 across all of their milestones. This is a downward change of -5% compared to December 2020 but is in keeping with national trends as a result of the Covid pandemic.

Digital video conferencing equipment is now installed in all Secondary schools. As a result, we are in a position to continue to develop the expanded curriculum offer via digital platforms as appropriate. Consequently, young people disadvantaged by the remoteness of a locality now have access to the same curriculum offer as those in more populated areas. Due to Covid the Digital Learning team were unable to access schools, as a result no digital leaders were trained however, all young people enhanced their digital learning skills as a result of learning from home.

A total of 1,067 young people across Argyll and Bute gained a Wider Achievement Award at SCQF levels 4-7 during 2020/21. This equates to 90% of all entries. These figures represent a significant recovery from 2020 when pandemic-related restrictions negatively affected young people's opportunities to complete the Wider Achievement awards.

The work of the Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) Coordinators who were appointed in August 2021 has increased and enhanced the number of schools' community business partnerships. Scottish Government grades the quality of business partnerships. Almost all schools have more than one partnership graded as 'Influencing' which is the highest level of partnership. This requires an employer to not only offer work-based vocational learning opportunities but also to engage regularly and effectively with the school regards curriculum design, curriculum delivery and joint staff training opportunities.

Across Argyll and Bute 95.02% of young people left school into a positive destination. This is an increase of 2.7% on the 2020/21 figure. This can be attributed to improved planning of attainment, achievement and vocational pathways in schools, which have been enhanced by the work of the DYW Coordinators. Equally, the widening availability of college courses in schools via video conferencing and a common column in all Secondary school timetables for this purpose, will extend the reach of further education and encourage the uptake of college courses post-school. The ongoing engagement of Secondary schools is encouraging pathways for senior pupils into higher education.

The level of participation in education, training or employment for 16-19 year-olds in Argyll and Bute is 93.5% (data released in September 2021). Although this is a slight fall from the previous years' performance of 94.1% it is still 1.3% above the national average. Argyll and Bute remains in the top 10 local authorities nationally for participation levels. Strong and enhanced partnership working between Education, Developing the Young Workforce, Skills Development Scotland and third sector partners is contributing to the strong performance in participation.

A total of 34 Flexible Learning Plans (FLPs) have been put in place across Secondary schools in 2021/22. Each FLP has presents a targeted response to an

issue with school engagement or another barrier to learning and achievement. Each FLP is monitored rigorously to ensure it remains relevant and is meeting the needs of the learner. Thus far, seven FLPs have led to post-school employment and almost all have improved the young persons' engagement with education and allowed them to achieve and develop to their potential.

Business Outcome BO109: All Our Adults Are Supported To Realise Their Potential

**20) Success Measure: EDU109\_01-Maintain the number of adults engaged in community learning and development (CLD) employability programmes**

The NOLB (No One Left Behind) employability programme was revised to accommodate learners. As a result the Community Learning team managed to maintain some adult learners using a blended approach of online and distanced learning. Through various initiatives that were run both by the Council and national agencies, we were able to access digital devices for some of our learners who did not have one. Thereby enabling some of them to continue with their learning.

Due to lockdown and Covid restrictions we were not able to significantly increase the numbers of adults with individual learning plans, though we continued to support and work with Adult Learners that remained engaged by addressing and working to reduce some of the barriers and challenges they faced around employability.

## Corporate Outcome - Our Economy Is Diverse and Thriving

### Business Outcome BO110: We Support Businesses, Employment and Development Opportunities

#### **21) Local Businesses and Employment Support Through Procurement Management**

The Procurement, Commercial and Contract Management Team recognises the strategic importance of maximising the economic benefits from directing Council spend to local businesses in terms of benefiting the local economy. Whilst it would not be acceptable to give preference to local businesses during any particular procurement, efforts are made to ensure that local businesses are upskilled so as to have the greatest chance of being successful in winning Council and other public sector business. Support continues to ensure we continued the percentage of Council spend that is under a contract or service level agreement while also maintaining the percentage of all Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) that win council contracts. We also worked to improve the delivery of contract management on all high risk contracts.

We effectively planned and coordinated the release of tenders to avoid overwhelming the market, in particular the local market, by issuing invitations to tender where the regulations allowed. For 2021/22, we awarded 151 contracts and of these 119 were Quick Quotes (ITQ's), with a level of spend with our local suppliers was 29.9%.

Our procurement processes were simplified and streamlined, ensuring that documentation was as straightforward as possible and engaged with our Economic Development colleagues and other stakeholders, to support emerging priorities that will support the economic recovery within Argyll and Bute.

The total number of bids and contracts awarded to local and SME suppliers is monitored monthly however, not all requirements can be fulfilled by the local supply market. The table below illustrates the number of tenders that were bid for and subsequently won by local suppliers during 2021/22.

Total No. of Tenders	Total No. of Tenders receiving local bids	Total No. of Tenders won by local bidders	Percentage Success Rate of local bidders
151	51	40	78.4%

#### **22) Argyll and Bute Council took part in the Meet the Buyer: Live Virtual Event on 8th June 2021.**

We put in place arrangements for continuing to deliver the civic and liquor licensing functions including the holding of virtual Board meetings and a system for the fast tracking of occasional applications for the licensing of outdoor areas. As part of the continuing easing of lockdown measures, agreements were put in place to enable businesses to utilise public spaces identified by the Council.

### **23) Success Measure: FIS110\_01-Increase the total value of Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) relief awarded**

We worked alongside other Council colleagues to support the payment of £2.7 million to support local businesses, protect the local economy and jobs, prevent business closure and promote economic recovery as lockdown restrictions eased and businesses started to re-open. We awarded nearly £24.5 million of Non-Domestic Rates reliefs to support local businesses.

### **24) Business Gateway support is the perfect piece for local jewellery maker**

A jewellery designer based in Cardross has enhanced its e-commerce offering in response to the Covid pandemic. Support was provided from Business Gateway via DigitalBoost (Scotland's national digital upskilling programme) and grant support from Argyll and Bute Council.

Linda Macdonald Jewellery specialises in hand-crafted silver and gold jewellery and Business Gateway supported the business during the Covid pandemic as it navigated retail store closures along with wholesale and supplier issues. Linda approached Business Gateway for support as the online retail side of the business grew during the pandemic. Through DigitalBoost, Linda and Matt accessed one to one support from a digital expert as well as digital webinars and online resources.

A Recovery grant was secured from the Business Gateway Local Growth Accelerator Programme.

The grant helped with the development of a hard copy trade brochure and digital display for use as Covid restrictions eased and in-person events are possible as well as enhancing the existing e-commerce platform. The Business Gateway Local Growth Accelerator Programme is funded by Argyll and Bute Council and the European Regional Development Fund 2014-20 Structural Funds Programme.



### **25) Business Gateway catapults consultancy to success with expanded team and ISO accreditation**

A business consultancy that specialises in helping organisations deliver efficiencies and become more sustainable, has been able to expand its team with the appointment of a new graduate, following a package of support from Business Gateway. The Business Gateway Local Growth Accelerator Programme is funded by Argyll and Bute Council and the European Regional Development Fund 2014-20 Structural Funds Programme and the client DWS Associates was able to take on a graduate placement who helped the business secure vital ISO accreditations, as well as the Scottish Business Pledge and Cyber Essentials Plus.



## Business Outcome BO111: We Influence And Engage With Business And Policy Makers

### 26) Supporting The Food Export Market

The UK withdrawal from the European Union on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020 has continued to pose challenges for food exporters in Argyll and Bute. The Environmental Health service must certify that the product is compliant with food safety legislation and fit for human consumption. To support businesses to continue exporting to the EU, audits of the main exporters were undertaken every 3 months. A total of 1,284 export health certificates were issued to businesses for exporting to non-EU countries (e.g. China, Middle East etc.) and 195 certificates for export to EU countries.

## Business Outcome BO112: Argyll And Bute Is Promoted To Everyone

### 27) Restoration of 39-43 Victoria Street, Rothesay, Isle of Bute

A Rothesay Townscape Heritage (TH) grant of £311,601 supported the comprehensive repair of a prominent listed building in multiple ownership, serving to safeguard the property for future generations whilst helping to lift the appearance of Rothesay's town center.

Traditional materials and methods of repair were used to ensure best practice, and align with Historic Environment Scotland's Advisory Standards of Repair.

Rothesay TH is a heritage-led partnership project that is funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic Environment Scotland, Argyll and Bute Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Smarter Choices Smarter Places and LEADER (grants to deliver support for rural development).

The partnership funding totals £2,746,049. It is anticipated with private owner contributions included, the total value of the project will be in excess of £3.2m. The programme is being delivered over a 5 year period and will conclude on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.



## 28) A Great Place To Live, Work And Visit - Promoting Argyll and Bute

The #abplace2b campaign was developed to promote the lifestyle and career opportunities on offer to attract new residents and skills. This is based on promoting the great lifestyle the geography allows for, and which sets the area apart from other locations. Both public and partners are encouraged to use this budget free way of promoting Argyll and Bute on social media, while [www.abplace2b.scot](http://www.abplace2b.scot) has been used to showcase the area, jobs on offer, local businesses, lifestyle etc.

Our #abplace2b Instagram account is the most followed of all of Scotland's councils and partner use of #abplace2b continues to grow. This will be complemented and developed by [www.abplace2b.scot](http://www.abplace2b.scot) which we are updating for relaunch in 2022.



In response to community concerns as tourism opened up after Covid and the restrictions eased, we developed and promoted our 'Have a great time. Be a great visitor.' message and campaign. This brought together information from different organisations and the campaign received a positive public response.



## Corporate Outcome - We Have An Infrastructure That Supports Sustainable Growth

Business Outcome BO113: Our Infrastructure Is Safe And Fit For The Future

**Success Measure: CSS113\_02-Maintain the average time to resolve ICT incidents**

**PERFORMANCE – TARGET MET**

**TARGET – <4.5 hours to resolve ICT incidents quarterly**

**ACTUAL – 2.0 hours to resolve ICT incidents quarterly**

We have operated well within our service level targets with service levels at or above target and our response times were as good as previous years. We also continue to network and engage with Scottish Local Government Digital Office, Society For Innovation Technology and Modernisation (SOCITM) and Scottish Government Digital Team to ensure that we achieve best practice, share our experience and expertise, maximise public sector joint working on ICT and digital.

With approximately 100 actions associated with the 2021-24 ICT and Digital Strategy Action Plan, the following are highlights while the majority of actions are progressing satisfactorily and to target:

- We have been accredited Public Services Network (PSN) and CE+ for 2022/23 as planned.
- We have implemented MS 365 and MS Teams with a selection of MS365 Apps.
- We continue to refresh our hardware assets and keep them up to date through the capital Asset Sustainability programme as planned.
- We continue to increase the provision of services on a digital platform wherever possible. For example the extension of the Parent Evening Booking System to additional schools and facilitate remote parent evenings via video call. Parents / carers can select and amend an appointment to suit their needs.
- We continue to support delivery of digital learning through the deployment of additional devices provided under the digital poverty initiative funded by the Scottish Government.
- We continue to integrate our systems using available technologies for example the live streaming of selected committee meetings from the council chambers integrating with MS teams and Modern.Gov
- We have reviewed and continue to improve our disaster recovery and business continuity plans and technologies.



## 29) Major Road And Infrastructure Projects

### Depot consolidation project

The scheme to rationalise our Oban depots was fully completed this year. This project saw three of the Council's existing roads depots (Oban Mill Park, Jackson's Quarry and the Appin depot) redeveloped as a single site for all roads and infrastructure works across Oban and Lorn. The project created local job/economic opportunities and going forward will reduce the Council's operating costs.



The next stage of the depot consolidation project is to focus on both Lochgilphead and Islay.

### Major marine transport connectivity schemes

Over the course of 2021/2022 we progressed a number of ambitious marine engineering schemes designed to guarantee safe and sustainable transport connectivity for our island communities. These include:

- Caignure: Developing the concept of this scheme towards a detailed design includes significant public engagement where a community group is working with the Council on elements of the design process.
- Fionnphort/Iona: progressing a £20million scheme to replace/renew key pieces of marine infrastructure to allow for full and unfettered access to and from Iona

### Road reconstruction

During this financial year we carried out an ambitious programme of road improvements with an investment of over £10m of council funding together with an additional £1.4m from the Timber Transport Fund. As a result of this ongoing prudent investment coupled with proportionate and appropriate engineering choices, the overall road condition continues to improve. Over 100 individual road reconstruction schemes were improved, contributing to keeping Argyll and Bute open for business.



### **Winter maintenance**

The council is responsible for carrying out winter maintenance which includes the removal of ice and snow, to its 2,300km of road. There is a network of roadside weather stations which together with specialist forecasting surveys provide the information required to carry out the bespoke treatments across the council area via 32 separate routes.

Key facts from this winter season:

- 2,049 individual vehicle runs
- Highest turned out route was the A819 Inveraray to Dalmally
- Total distance travelled was 105,024 miles
- Total salt used was 11,303 tonnes
- Total spend £2,258,228.59

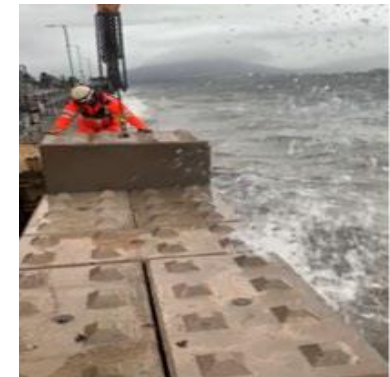


### **Bute seawall**

In December 2021 a combination of high tide and an unusual easterly wind direction resulted in significant damage occurring to the seawall on the A886 at Ardbeg on Bute.

With the seawall washed away the damage was so severe that utility pipes, cables and conduits were left exposed. It was highly probable that significant further damage would occur to the carriageway as well as to private land beyond. This is a key route into Rothesay and required an urgent response. The council's own internal team worked with external contractors to put in place a temporary sea defence using interlocking concrete blocks.

In this financial year we working on a permanent, lasting solution for the seawall.





### **Bridge improvements for the future**

We were successful in securing a £5.5m grant for bridge and structure improvements/replacement. This will enable a number of bridges to be strengthened and/or replaced over the coming years. These improvements will improve the resilience of our transport infrastructure whilst also reducing some of the routine maintenance work, and in turn overall costs.

### **Oban Bay**

In December 2021 the council's harbour board agreed to progress the municipal port for Oban. As a result the council will become responsible for the wider waters of Oban Bay. Through a statutory process which includes a Harbour Revision Order the Council will have the power to ensure that vessel movements within the bay are safely managed.

### **Rothesay pontoons project**

The scheme specification and procurement was carried out in the last financial year, with delivery of the scheme commencing in this financial year and in to the following year. This is a c. £900,000 project to provide around 20 pontoon berths for Rothesay, providing access to the town/Isle of Bute for leisure yachters. This is a significant and affluent market area, which will bring increased visitor numbers to Rothesay and support the local economy.

Access to the marine tourism market is a continuing theme, and this project comes off the back of the Campbeltown and Oban pontoon projects which have brought significant economic benefit to both of those towns.

### **Lady Lismore, ferry services and Ports and Harbours**

The council operates four lifeline ferry services as well as 39 ports and harbours across the council area. This financial year a new vessel was commissioned and built as the previous vessel required replacing due to safety requirements. The new vessel connects Port Appin with the Isle of Lismore and came in to service in May 2022.



### **30) Disposal Of Assets No Longer Required**

Significant capital funds were received by disposing of properties that have been identified as 'held for sale'. The disposal of properties no longer required helps us meet the longer term capital targets, generates income for reinvestment and reduces ongoing running costs, maintenance and insurance risks. The property can then be utilised by new enterprises to develop. A good example of this was the disposal of Blairvadach House and grounds.

### **31) Maintaining Our Assets**

Working with colleagues in the Education Service, the Council's Property Design Team delivered projects in the Early Years settings which enabled the provision of 1140 hours of pre-school education to be fulfilled.

### **32) Success Measure: COM113\_03-The Council's Capital Plan is delivered within the approved budget tolerances as at the investment decision stage**

During 2021/22 the following 5 projects from the Council's Capital Plan were being delivered by the Programme and Project Management Services Team within Commercial Services:-

- a) Oban Transit Berthing Facility (OTBF) – Practical completion has been achieved and the facility is operational. Closing out on the remaining defects and the appointment of a specialist marine engineering consultant to review, assess and report on the root cause of any issues and mitigating actions.
- b) Rothesay Pavilion Adaptive Restoration (RPN) – The original contractor entered into administration during 2020/21. The services of replacement contractor, Robertson Construction Central West were secured who will deliver Phase 1 Pre-Construction Activities and Phase 2 Construction Works to Completion. Due to emerging cost/budget issues the Phase 2 Construction Works are currently on hold whilst additional capital funding support is sought.
- c) Helensburgh Waterfront Development (HWD) – The main contract was awarded to Heron Bros Ltd on 14 July 2020 and works commenced on site in August 2020. Section 1 works which includes the construction of coastal flood defences, car parking and public realm and new leisure building are well advanced and on track to be handed over to the Council on 29 July 2022.
- d) Kilmory Business Park – A joint public venture with M&K MacLeod Ltd to develop the area with a new business facility is being progressed. This is supported by funding contributions from the Scottish Government Regeneration Capital Grant Fund; Argyll and Bute Council; Highlands and Islands Enterprise; and M&K MacLeod Ltd. The Planning application has been approved and the funding from the Scottish Government has been secured. We are now in the process of finalising the various legal agreements (funding, construction, land/property/access rights etc.) to facilitate the delivery of the works later in FY22/23.

- e) Lochgilphead Front Green – We have worked closely with our colleagues in the Projects and Renewables team for the delivery of the significant public realm improvements in Lochgilphead. The project is programmed to achieve Practical Completion in FQ1 FY22/23.

## Business Outcome BO114 Our Communities are Cleaner and Greener

### 33) Working Towards A Cleaner, Greener Future

#### Carbon Friendly Council

The Council's carbon footprint will reduce by circa 460 Tonnes per annum as a result of investing in carbon friendly energy solutions. This includes LED Lighting, Air Source Heat Pumps and Solar PV panels. We continued to take opportunities to improve insulation and replace single glazing with double glazing. We have made use of the Non-Domestic Energy Efficiency Framework (NDEEF) to invest £1.2m which provides the Council with a simple 10 year payback period on the investment. Almost all of these 'mini-projects' have been delivered with only a small volume of work scheduled to be implemented at the start of the 2022/23 financial year.

#### Island landfill cells



Over the course of the previous year two island landfill schemes were progressed to ensure there is suitable landfill capacity for Mull, Islay and Jura's general waste up until December 2025. The cost of these investments is in the region of £1million.

Some landfill capacity will be required beyond the end of 2025 for items such as waste from abattoirs and some building materials.

#### Preparing for 2025 Biodegradable Municipal Waste Landfill Ban

We have continued to work with West Dunbartonshire Council on a joint procurement solution for municipal waste after December 2025. This is likely to result in a joint contract for some of Argyll and Bute's waste material and would bring efficiencies due to economies of scale. However, it is likely that Argyll and Bute will need additional waste transfer stations particularly in the Helensburgh and Lomond area.





### Refuse collection and recycling

We collect refuse and recycling from over 48,000 households and 3,400 commercial premises, as well as providing 11 civic amenity sites and 98 recycling collection sites across the council area.

### Decarbonisation projects

Over the course of 2021/2022 we have progressed a number of schemes which contribute to the Council's corporate goals to reduce our carbon footprint and provide for cleaner, greener transport options this includes:

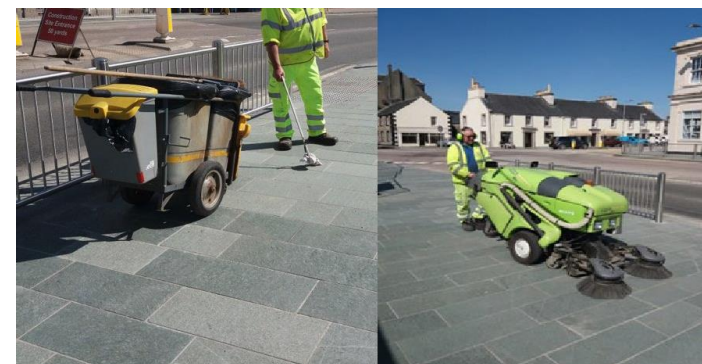
Additional electric and hybrid vehicles, additional EV charging points, LED lighting replacements as well as carrying out proportionate, low carbon roads repair techniques, such as surface dressing. Low carbon road repairs have a significant reduction in carbon emission compared to traditional surfacing methods. In many applications surface dressing can be a more environmentally friendly surface treatment generating far less carbon per M<sup>2</sup> than laying a typical 40mm layer of asphalt material on a road. However, whole life costs need to be considered both in terms of carbon and finance. This means that in the long term it is more cost effective and indeed necessary from a structural point of view to lay asphalt/bituminous macadam rather than surface dress.



TREATMENT TYPE	TYPICAL CARBON COST
Inlay	8.43kg per meter squared of CO <sub>2</sub>
Surface dressing	1kg per meter squared of CO <sub>2</sub>

### Street cleansing

We continue to deliver our commitments under the Environmental Protection Act and are consistently achieving high marks in the street cleanliness index which is administered by Keep Scotland Beautiful. Street cleanliness contributes towards public health as well as providing a clean and attractive environment in which our communities, businesses and visitors can thrive.



## Corporate Outcome - Getting it right

### Business Outcome BO115: We Are Efficient And Cost Effective

#### **34) Protecting Council Finances**

The administration of Covid funding placed additional pressures placed on the Financial Services teams, but despite this not only did the team protect the Councils finances but also delivered outstanding customer service.

- We have implemented a new Counter Fraud Team on a two-year pilot basis to enhance the Council's zero tolerance to fraud and protect the public purse. During 2021-22 the team rebilled £659k as a direct consequence of their work and have recovered £572k of that total to date.
- We collected 96.28% of Council Tax exceeding the target of 96.00%.
- The average investment rate for 2021-22 was 0.418% compared to the average 7-day LIBID (London Interbank Bid Rate) rate of -0.74%. The investments generated £0.485m of interest in 2021-22.
- The Creditors Team processed 96.6% of invoices due within 30 days, exceeding the target of 95.5%.
- The 2021/22 internal audit plan was fully completed and reported by the target date of the June Audit and Scrutiny Committee.
- The service closely monitored the financial impact of Covid on the Council throughout the year, regularly updating assumptions and projections, to ensure that the financial returns were robust, and the Council would receive the appropriate levels of Covid specific Scottish Government funding.

#### **35) Elected Member Support and seamless governance arrangements**

- The performance standards (set by the Electoral Commission) continued to be met whilst working within the Covid guidelines. This included the delivery of 1 local by-election, a Scottish Parliamentary Election and the preparation to deliver the Local Government Election in May 2022
- Technology developments facilitated the move to virtual ways of working and ensured the work of Elected Members and functioning of Committees continued. Virtual meetings now take place and the recorded sessions are posted on the Website. These developments have resulted in new ways of working, enabled a shift to paperless processes, on-line surgeries, virtual seminars and Elected Member training events.
- The Council continued to meet the target response times where possible for Freedom of information requests, Subject Access Requests and Complaints resolved at Stage 1. All of which have been impacted by Covid and high volumes of requests.

**36) Success Measure: CSS115\_01-Increasing percentage of self service and automated contacts through the Customer Service Centre and Website.**

**PERFORMANCE – TARGET MET**

**TARGET – 62% of all contacts**

**ACTUAL – 73% of all contacts**

A performance of 73% was achieved against a target of 62% or 410,000 out of 563,000 customer interactions through the Contact Centre's various channels:

This maintained the significant shift to digital prompted by Covid lockdown the previous year and the ongoing provision of high quality online and automated services that customers prefer to use for 24/7 convenience. Despite there being a large reduction in Covid related enquiries and support requests compared to 2020/21, the value of efficiencies attributable to use of online services was maintained at £912k.

2021/22 ALL TOTALS	2021/22 TOTAL	2021/22 PERCENTAGE
MEDIATED TRANSACTIONS	152,272	27%
AUTOMATED INFORMATION	296,736	53%
AUTOMATED TRANSACTIONS	113,733	20%
AUTOMATED INFORMATION & TRANSACTIONS	410,469	73%
TOTAL	562,741	100%

Significant new online developments in 2021/22 included:

- Launched the council's Alexa smart speaker service with its "when's my bin day?" service, which now has 1,216 subscribers who used the service was used 7,257 times last year by 1,216 subscribers.
- Roll out of a number of new satellite websites including the [Staycation Site](#), [Invest in Argyll](#) and over a dozen new [school sites](#) recreated using Wordpress, [Period Product](#) access and sites for partners such as the [Helensburgh Museum site](#).
- Implementation of a new marketing and notification system called Eloqua to refresh the [Keep in the Loop](#) service, which now has 10,489 subscribers and the addition of new Ferry disruption alerts to that service, which issued 17,000 alerts to subscribers over the winter.
- Implementation of a next generation web chat bot called Abbot to the council website.
- In addition, the online services retained an exemplary record for accessibility of content, which is crucial not only from an equality point of view, but also to ensure the website is as usable as possible for customers with a range of abilities. Hence in March 2022 we scored a 99% standard and ranked as

13<sup>th</sup> best in the UK out of over 400 council websites on the [independent Silktide](#) standard.

YEAR	CHANNEL SHIFT TRANSACTIONS	POTENTIAL SAVINGS
2017/18	261,399	£460,878
2018/19	267,018	£464,865
2019/20	390,234	£670,710
2020/21	440,165	£914,871
2021/22	417,590	£912,278

### **37) Scottish Local Government Living Wage Consolidation and Implementation**

A review of the pay and grading structure, rationalisation and streamlining of allowances and expenses along with the modernisation of terms and conditions was carried out. Following a consultative ballot by the Joint Trade Unions on the proposed method of consolidating the (SLG) Living Wage into the pay scale and the proposed changes to the conditions of service, the SLGLW was implemented.

### **38) EDU115\_01-Our Grant spend is maximised**

Gaelic specific grant funding awarded through Bòrd na Gàidhlig supports identified targets for Education within the Gaelic Language Plan. The Gaelic Language Plan has three areas of focus; promoting a positive image of Gaelic, increasing the learning of Gaelic and increasing the use of Gaelic.

Maximising the use of this strategic grant allows the Education Service to develop and promote Gaelic Medium Education particularly in our more remote communities, such as the islands.

[Business Outcome BO116: We Engage And Work With Our Customers, Staff And Partners](#)

### **39) Listening And Improving Our Services**

#### **Customer Services Excellence Award**

We extended the Customer Service Excellence Award to more areas of service. Achievement of this nationally recognised external accreditation demonstrates our commitment to positive and constructive relationships with customers and partners and how we use this to drive continuous improvement in our services. The Planning and Regulatory team retained their Customer Standards Excellence accreditation with the number of

compliance-plus criteria increasing from 4 to 7. Legal and Regulatory Services obtained full reaccreditation with two additional criteria and upgraded to Compliance Plus status. The overall approach to delivering excellent customer service was commended but specifically our understanding of our customers' needs and our commitment to continual improvement.

### **New Life For A Derelict Site**

An innovative project was the lease of a derelict site at Lochside Street, Oban. The ground had been vacant for some time and there were title concerns. After extended marketing a lease was agreed for a garden center with a rooftop bar based on a temporary building structure. This generated income, new employment opportunities and redeveloped a derelict but central site.

### **Developing Working Relationships**

Over the last 12 months the Estates Management team have worked well with large landowners such as Argyll Estates and Luss Estates as well as developing key relationships with ACHA and Fyne Homes who deliver social housing in the area. This has resulted in the resolution of some long running issues around car park leases and civic amenity sites and progressing some development schemes with the housing associations.

[Business Outcome BO117: We Encourage Creativity And Innovation To Ensure Our Workforce Is Fit For The Future](#)

### **40) Our Future Teaching Workforce**

Due to Covid restrictions professional learning activities for probationary teachers were provided online from August 2021 to April 2022. Twilight sessions were provided for probationers over the course of this period which has developed their skills and knowledge of Learning and Teaching. Early feedback from the cohort highlights that probationers have found the majority of sessions helpful and useful for their own practice.

Professional learning activities were delivered by both employees within Argyll and Bute Council and our partners, including West of Scotland Development Education Centre and the Northern Alliance. The Northern Alliance also provided a range of sessions for Newly Qualified Teachers which our probationers were encouraged to attend. These sessions were over and above the Argyll and Bute Probationer Programme.

Additionally, year-on-year the percentage of our Early Years (EY) workers who have gained their qualifications is steadily increasing and will be a positive picture at the end of this session.

### **41) Quality Conversations With Our Workforce**

Changes were made to the PRD (Performance Review & Development) process to put quality conversations at the heart of how we do our business. Our updated approach moved away from the prescribed PRD template and is now focused on an ongoing dialogue that captures conversations between the line manager and their staff about objectives, behaviours, skills, development and career/development aspirations.

This approach also encouraged managers to consider how quality conversations can support wider communication at team level on agreeing objectives and key activities and monitoring progress.

#### **42) A healthy workforce and a healthy working environment**

A healthy workforce and a healthy working environment are essential to achieving higher levels of attendance and providing high quality services. The Wellbeing Team reviewed, updated and relaunched two key procedures, The Reducing Stress in the Workplace procedure and the Supporting Attendance procedure.

In order to ensure that all employees were fully aware of the changes and the support that is available to them in managing their health, wellbeing and attendance at work a suite of information resources were delivered.

#### **43) The information provided to our community groups, individuals and partners is easy to understand**

The Communities and Partnership Team send out regular information bulletins and Funding Alerts.

The bulletin is sent fortnightly to over 300 community groups across Argyll and Bute, and includes information on consultations, training opportunities, events and signposting to funding opportunities.

Funding is a significant need arising for our community groups and third sector. Over 1,500 people access the Funding Alert each month either through direct e-mail receipt or via the webpage. We are currently working with our partners to support their engagement with our Funding Alert and using the 'funding search' function on our webpage.

In a 2021/22 survey 96% rated the information easy to understand.

#### **44) Connecting with our Employees and Communities - Health and wellbeing**

To connect the council and its employees better a new website was launched - [www.mycouncilworks.co.uk](http://www.mycouncilworks.co.uk)

To better connect with our communities we issued a free weekly news email subscription. By adapting the content to include more Covid-health and other topical non-council news we supported our communities' wellbeing. The following is just one of the comments received –

*“Thank you for such regular, clear newsletters. So comforting to know we in isolation are included in outside life!.....and I trust it!”*

SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES – These are the significant challenges during 2021/22. Specific additional activity or mitigating actions were carried out to reduce the negative impact on service delivery.

#### Corporate Outcome - People Live Active Healthier And Independent Lives

##### **1) Ongoing Care Home Support**

Due to financial impact of Covid on social care providers there was increased pressure to get contracts and payments to providers for delivering care home services. The Social Work Finance Team continued to deliver a financial sustainability scheme on behalf of the Scottish Government to provide financial support to local care providers to help them deal with the cost pressures placed upon them by the pandemic. This is an ongoing piece of work.

##### **2) Self-Isolation Support Grants (SISG)**

The 300% weekly increase in the volume of Self Isolation Support Grants (SISG) received from December 2021 through to April 2022 due to Omicron caused a significant challenge. Benefit Assessor staff had to be redeployed to help with the administration of the grants. This introduced delays in processing Housing Benefit despite efforts to recruit additional Benefit Assessors to assist the service. A negative consequence was that the Service failed to process new claims for Housing Benefit within 21 days.

##### **3) Temporary accommodation for households**

A significant challenge is emerging in relation to the statutory provision of suitable temporary accommodation for households presenting as homeless to Argyll and Bute Council. We rely on the private rented sector for the provision of temporary accommodation and over recent months the housing market has picked up significantly and a number of landlords have asked for their properties back thus reducing the number of temporary accommodation units available to the Council. There has not been a budget increase in relation to the temporary accommodation budget for a significant time period so the ability to pay a competitive rent to secure replacement units is very limited. The increasing pressures on accommodation managed by Housing Services in the form of changes to the way that Asylum Seekers will be accommodated, the Ukrainian Resettlement Programme and changes in the Criminal Justice system to relieve pressures on prisons will and are making the situation even more challenging.

At present close scrutiny of this issue is being carried out in order to quantify and identify any emerging trend and potential solutions.

##### **4) Road and Infrastructure Services - Customer contact versus reducing capacity**

Although significant progress has been made in this area of our work over the past few years, with increasing automation; availability of proactive information to reduce avoidable contact; improved business processes and service redesign, there continues to be a huge pressure in terms of correspondence. Although further resources have been committed to this area of work, it may be the case that should a further significant improvement be desired, that further investment is required. The pressure on back office teams to juggle a range of work streams continues to be a challenge.

Ultimately our goal is to continue with the process of channels shift, encouraging all customers to self-serve. This requires it to be supported with the appropriate resources, information and expertise to provide an enhanced data set to allow for self-service.

## Corporate Outcome - People Will Live In Safer and Stronger Communities

### 5) Food safety programme

There is considerable work and resources ongoing to restart the official food safety programme in Argyll and Bute. This has involved the risk assessment of over 2,400 businesses to develop a new interventions plan, the training of authorised officers in new process and systems and a review on how statutory food controls are delivered. This will be a challenge given the resourcing difficulties and other conflicting work demands at a time when there is a national shortage of qualified environmental health and food safety officers.

### 6) Support to community organisations

**Success Measure: CPD 104\_01 Number of capacity building sessions held with community groups**

**PERFORMANCE – OFF TARGET**

**TARGET – 360 Sessions per annum**

**ACTUAL – 217 Sessions per annum**

Due to significant long term absences and the induction of new members of staff there was limited staff resource within the Community Development Team. However, support to community organisations has continued during this time, with resources being dedicated to support the Covid response and the delivery of targeted projects including the Micro Grants Fund for village halls and community organisations.

Elements of this targeted support have not been reflected within this quantitative measure. The delivery of capacity building support to develop the skills and confidence of communities across Argyll and Bute, continues to be a priority for the team.

In conjunction with Community Learning and Development Partners, the Community Development Team are undertaking a training needs analysis with community groups. Working in partnership enables the service to meet any fluctuations in staffing due to unforeseen absence and associated impacts on community organisations.



## Corporate Outcome - Children and Young People Have The Best Possible Start

### 7) Catering and cleaning

Several discrete challenges face the catering and cleaning service. Across all sectors in addition to price increases there have been on-going supply issues in the food industry.

The Soil Association have implemented a new inspection portal which has meant the process for reaccreditation is extremely challenging. We achieve this standard for our school meals.

Continuing to prepare for the roll out of Universal Free School Meals (UFSMs) for P6 and P7s, breakfast and holiday provision has been challenging due to lack of clarity on budgets, information and resources to continue with the implementation.

The recovery of commercial catering and events income is continuing. The increase in events is promising but will need continued support and nurturing to continue and increase.

Delivering an enhanced cleaning service has been challenging as prior to the pandemic the cleaning standards in schools and offices was already at the lower end of acceptable. Limited logistics funding has enabled some enhanced cleaning to be delivered in schools however this is not sustainable in the long term without committed funding and permanently increased hours.

### 8) Positive destinations for our looked after children

**Success Measure: EDU106\_01-Increase positive destinations for our looked after children in Argyll and Bute**

**PERFORMANCE – OFF TARGET**

**TARGET – 90.0% annual data**

**ACTUAL – 71.4% annual data**

Physical attendance in the school environment has become more of a challenge after periods of Lockdown. In order to approve this a multi-agency Maximising Attendance working group has been established to address non-attendance. Additionally, in some areas, it has been difficult to provide work experience due to Covid restrictions.

#### 9) Positive destinations

**Success Measure: EDU107\_04-Maintain the percentage of 16-19 year olds in Argyll and Bute participating in education, training or employment**

**PERFORMANCE – OFF TARGET**

**TARGET – 94.0% annual data**

**ACTUAL – 93.5% annual data**

**Success Measure: EDU107\_05-Maintain the percentage of all young people leaving school achieving a positive destination into further education, training or employment**

**PERFORMANCE – OFF TARGET**

**TARGET – 95.0% annual data**

**ACTUAL – 93.5% annual data**

To support schools in increasing the number and quality of work-based vocational learning opportunities for senior phase learners four Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) Co-ordinators were appointed in August 2021. The four Co-ordinators are line managed by a Regional Lead, a position hosted by Argyll College until recently. Argyll and Bute's Regional Lead has been absent since October 2021. This has resulted in some compromises in the leadership of the Co-ordinators, which may have impacted on their work over that period. The Education Manager and management at Argyll College have worked together to mitigate the impact of the absence of a line manager, and recruitment of a new Regional DYW Lead will be completed by July 2022, hosted now by the Local Authority rather than Argyll College to increase coherence in strategic planning.

Despite the challenges detailed above, the DYW Co-ordinators have had a positive impact on the number of young people engaging with employers' post-Covid, which is a key factor in increasing participation and positive destination figures.

### Corporate Outcome - Education, Skills and Training Maximise Opportunities For All

#### 10) Adults engaged in community learning and development (CLD) employability programmes

The support and development for participants of No One Left Behind has been negatively impacted by Covid. Reduction to staffing through budget cuts saw the removal of the Adult Literacy Workers and the Literacies Service support team. This left a provision gap and created additional barriers for Adult Learners who were trying to improve their employability skills. As a result some Adult Learners became disengaged. Pre-pandemic Community Learning Workers provided a face-to-face provision. Staff had to upskill at speed to deliver and provide many different online learning platforms before introducing some Adult Learners to them. This was alongside engaging with learners through digital and non-face-to-face provision. Input into the Scottish Government No One Left Behind quarterly reporting was completed showing the barriers that were identified.

## Corporate Outcome - We Have An Infrastructure That Supports Sustainable Growth

### **11) Cyber-attacks**

2021/22 saw an unprecedented increase in the level of risk associated with cyber-attacks. The public sector has repeatedly experienced significant cyber-attacks which disrupted services and cost millions of pounds to remediate. This has been a global phenomenon, and with heightened geo-political tensions there is an increasing risk that an attack targeted at a specific sector or organisation will escape into the wider world and have serious worldwide consequences.

The need for our ICT teams to be ever more vigilant and responsive has never been greater. Our ICT teams have responded admirably to each and every emerging threat but the additional day to day challenges inevitably impact on the workload to maintain the very high levels of service being delivered.

### **12) MicroSoft365**

The accelerated implementation of MS365 to enable Teams as part of the Covid response resulted in the need to reallocate staff resource from other priorities. This enabled a fast and effective transition with minimum disruption to the business and the creation of a secure operational environment in the Cloud

### **13) Continuing the trend of improvement/arresting the decline in our road network**

Our Annual Status and Options Report sets out the benefits of continued investment in our road network and highlights the critical risk of underinvestment. Although our network has seen a welcome improvement in recent years, we would need to spend in the region of £10million annually to maintain a 'standstill' position, and significantly more to see continued improvements.

Year on year budget consultations and public feedback has shown the importance of roads to our communities. Maintaining the required level of investment is likely to be challenging in future years given the predicted decline in available capital funding. This brings with it significant engineering, economic, financial and reputational risks for the Council. We continue to deliver a range of different technical solutions that are designed to be proportionate for the use of the road and take into consideration the island and rural geography of Argyll and Bute.

As an example, we have made extensive use of in situ recycling which is where the existing road surface is excavated then re-laid at a new level – this has both environmental benefits and also helps us overcome some of the logistical challenges in getting new materials to some of our harder to reach areas.

### **14) The sustainability of our current cemetery provision**

There are significant ongoing pressures on the Council's cemeteries, with some critical sites in Kintyre and on Mull approaching their capacity. The Council will require to take a view on potential future reductions in cemetery availability and options for our customers or make a significant (likely to be in the tens of millions) financial allocation to allow for significant expansion, environmental compliance, future proofing etc. of the current provision.

This is the subject of an ongoing consultation and review exercise, which will be reported to Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee over the course of this financial year.

#### **15) Delivering the Craignure and Iona/Fionnphort marine infrastructure schemes**

Financing and delivering these once-in-a-generation marine engineering schemes will pose significant resource challenges over the course of the next financial year.

#### **16) Major projects - Rothesay Pavilion Adaptive Restoration**

**Success Measure: COM113\_03-The Council's Capital Plan is delivered within the approved budget tolerances as at the investment decision stage.**

**Success Measure: COM113\_04-The Council's Capital Plan is delivered on time.**

Following the insolvency of the Main Contractor in March 2020 the Council procured the services of Robertson Construction Central West, through the SCAPE\* Procure National Construction Framework, to deliver Pre-Construction Activities i.e. develop a Schedule of Activities and Tendered Price to take the project through to Practical Completion.

In December 2021 the Council was advised that the cost of completing the works would significantly exceed the available and approved budget, by some £12million. At that point the Council took the decision to 'pause' the works at the end of the Pre-Construction Activities, and to lobby for additional capital funding support from external organisations, including the Scottish and United Kingdom Governments.

Proposals for interim works are being developed, which might be delivered within the remaining available budget, and which would help protect the significant investment already made in the building. Given the unprecedented impact of recent global events e.g. Covid, the UK withdrawal from the EU, and most recently the Russian invasion of Ukraine, national and global economies have been adversely affected. The cost of construction materials, equipment, plant, and resources has risen significantly. This raises significant issues for the on-going delivery of capital works projects at a time when not only is the Council's capital budget being reduced, but also its ability to finance the cost of borrowing, using revenue funding, is also being reduced.

*\* a public sector procurement organisation that offers construction procurement frameworks*

#### **17) Essential and general maintenance**

We continue to have access to only a limited number of contractors. This creates difficulty in delivery of work especially where availability of sites is restricted such as school holiday periods. Additionally, our contractors are suffering from the nationwide skills shortage which also causes difficulty in being able to deliver a service within the desired timescales.

The annual revenue Central Repairs Account continues to be under pressure across all services to conduct essential maintenance. There are however particular 'hotspots' where funding allocations mean it is becoming increasingly difficult to ensure essential health, safety and business continuity objectives are achieved.

### **18) Reducing our carbon footprint – reaching net-zero**

The significant progress that has been made in reducing the Council's property-related carbon footprint has primarily been as a result of dealing with the more straightforward and cost effective solutions. The journey to net-zero requires the delivery of more complicated solutions which are more costly and there is challenge in balancing the need for carbon reduction at a time when budgets/resources are reducing.

Many areas within Argyll and Bute are off-gas grid and the electrical grid has limitations in terms of capacity/constraints. These issues continue to impact on the Council (and the wider community) in terms of resilience and delivering renewables solutions, EV charging etc.

### **19) Increasing the pace of change to deliver on decarbonisation objectives**

Of particular concern in this area of work is the impending legislative changes and the move away from petrol and diesel vehicles. It is expected that the new Transport Scotland Electric Vehicle Strategy will set ambitious national goals, with the expectation that local authorities will deliver the bulk of the infrastructure to allow for the necessary modal shift.

While we are advanced in our planning for a future EVC network it is expected that the pace of delivery of schemes will need to increase to match demand. It appears likely that a rolling programme of multiple annual installations will be required. This will need to be appropriately resourced. Even if the Council appoints a term contractor for EVC installations, this will require to be contract managed and reported on. At present it is expected that there should not be any particular financial issue for the Council, as EVC development and associated project management costs are likely to be covered by Transport Scotland/Scottish Government funding. There is however a significant challenge in delivering the infrastructure to support a transport revolution, and ensuing reputational risk.

There will be similar pressures to replace the Council's fleet. We recognise that we must not instigate change simply for its own sake, continuity of service delivery needs to be first and foremost throughout this process. Although there have been trials of electric and electric/hybrid heavy vehicles, it remains to be seen if the current market offering is robust and resilient enough to deliver our services to the current quality specifications and frequencies.

### **20) Working towards the 2025 Biodegradable Municipal Waste (BMW) ban and the end of the Waste PPP contract in 2026**

While these significant changes are some years in the future the planning is already underway. The BMW ban will pose a significant and ongoing financial risk to the Council. Officers are currently engaged on a number of fronts working with Scottish Government and neighbouring local authorities to plan for and reduce the impact of the ban, and to provide Elected Members with advice and support for any lobbying activities that they may wish to undertake.

## Corporate Outcome - Getting it right

### **21) Working Closer Together**

Financial Services' has continued to deliver business as usual whilst undertaking additional work to manage and report on the wide range of additional Covid funding provided by the Scottish Government to our front-line services.

### **22) Our Grant spend is maximised**

The grant spend for the Gaelic Specific Grant, awarded through Bòrd na Gàidhlig, is primarily used to fund staffing across our Primary and Secondary sector. Staffing our schools remains a challenge across the Service and this is a particular challenge in Gaelic Medium Education. To mitigate this, the Service requests Gaelic teachers in their probationary year for vacancies within Gaelic Medium Education on a yearly basis. We have found that a number of the probationers that have worked in Gaelic Medium in Argyll and Bute choose to stay on, growing the core staffing in Gaelic Medium. Additionally, the Service now provides advertisements for Gaelic specific posts bilingually to attract new staff to vacancies that arise.

### **23) Workforce planning**

We are putting mechanisms in place to succession plan and to reduce the overall age profile of our workforce, providing attractive career/growth opportunities and the ability to 'grow our own'. In particular we have had historically poor retention of graduate engineers, although with recent changes to the structure and progression pathways within our Roads Design Team we are hopeful of having better retention in this area of the business going forward. Of particular concern though is the age profile of our operational squads and within our middle management positions. In addition there are increasing challenges relating to recruitment and retention of staff due in part to more attractive remuneration packages being offered by competitors.

Across the Council some of our teams continue to face recruitment challenges. We have taken a variety of actions to address the situation including a review of job descriptions, improved wording of adverts and increased profile on social media as well as support for team members on sickness absence.

For some Teams within the Council there are serious resourcing issues due to the national shortage in qualified professional officers and the inability to attract to Argyll and Bute. On one occasion, after three adverts, no qualified officers applied for a post, despite the offer of flexible locations and home working. This reduces the team's capacity, and leaves the options to recruit trainees or operate with long term vacancies.

## CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT - WE ASKED, YOU SAID, WE DID....

1. **We Asked...** Young people, parents and carers, partners (Health, Education, Social Work) about their experiences of working with the Educational Psychology Service during restrictions from Covid and which elements we should take forward.

**You Said...** Very positive experience across all groups, particularly around informal contact with Educational Psychologists and flexibility to meet online and attend training.

**We Did...** Production of “Working remotely with the Educational Psychology Service document” outlining how these will be incorporated into practice.

2. **We asked...** We asked about the experiences of attending the small group consultations, including perceived benefits and challenges of the sessions.

**You Said...** Positive experiences from schools in the co-working element to share ideas and approaches they use within their setting. General view that sessions were difficult to attend due to time constraints.

**We Did...** Decision not to proceed with small group consultations in the session ahead.

3. **We asked...** Experiences of children and young people who accessed the Counselling in Schools Service. The first session focused on the self-referral process and raising awareness of the Service.

**You Said...** Children and young people reported that they valued the service and suggested several ways we could improve delivery.

**We Did...** Development of posters to promote service within schools. Review of Self-referral and professional referral with the children and young people’s comments.

**To help with improvements we also conducted a number of surveys, the following is just a sample of the wide ranging topics we sought user and community views on -**

4. **Pupil Consultation on Transformation Programme.**  
The consultation feedback informed the development of the pupil consultation materials to ensure that pupils could engage with the Transformational Change materials and had the opportunity to feedback.

5. **Parental Involvement and Engagement Census.**

Information is yet to be returned to the Scottish Government. Within the census, it is clear that there is a lack of confidence from parents in relation to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Aberdeen City Council's approach to this is being explored with parents and a Parent Council Chair has been engaged in this.

6. **Youth Scotland evaluated the Health and Wellbeing of pupils at Dunoon Grammar School and Lochgilphead Joint Campus.**

A dissemination plan has been created and meetings have been established to identify key improvement priorities for the school and community to engage with.

7. **A number of consultations have taken place in relation to poverty.**

This was following a group working session with Education staff involved in Poverty Alliance training. A small number of parents have been consulted via a school in relation to their experience using an empathy tool. A small number of pupils have been consulted using the same approach. Information will be fed into a Child Poverty Action Plan.

8. **Digital Platform**

In the development of an Authority wide digital moderation platform, Officers worked closely to develop the bespoke platform for Argyll and Bute Schools. During the pilot period, school leaders were consulted in the next iteration of development. This level of consultation has led to a high quality digital resource that all schools are able to access, despite geography. This resource supports robust professional discussions regarding improvements in attainment.

9. **An 1140 hours parental satisfaction survey ran in all localities.**

10. **Argyll & Bute Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2022-2027: Public Consultation Final Phase: September – October 2021**

Following extensive consultation and stakeholder engagement in 2019/20 and 2020/21, the final consultative draft LHS was issued for comment and feedback. Following which the strategy was approved by the Strategic Housing Forum and full Council in November 2021. The responses were positive and reinforced key aspects of the strategy. These key aspects include the need to improve stock condition and energy efficiency; the need for more affordable housing to attract and retain permanent residents; the negative impacts of too many second/holiday homes; and the need to ensure sufficient infrastructure to support new build programmes. The overall view was summed up in the comment: "I think the Housing Strategy does pin point the key issues and actions needed well." At the same time the draft LHS was submitted to the Scottish Government and the formal Peer Review process, and again very positive feedback was received, with particular commendation on our approach to community engagement, consultation and partnership working. This included the support and joint working with local community groups and led to the establishment of a dedicated Community Housing Network for community-led housing projects. The consultation plan is available on the LHS page of the council website, and is summarised in the new LHS itself, which was formally launched at the Strategic Housing Forum in March 2022.



**11. Argyll & Bute Housing Contribution Statement (HCS) 2022/23 – 2024/25**

Housing Services engaged with HSCP colleagues on the review and update of the new three-year HCS which forms part of the Joint Strategic Plan for the HSCP. This involved consultation and approval by partners.

**12. Regulatory Services and Building Standards Stakeholder Surveys**

Regulatory Services and Building Standards carried out a number of stakeholder surveys to attain their views on specific issues aimed at making service improvements. These included:

- A survey of businesses who received a Covid intervention to assess the quality of the service provided the appropriateness of information on public health controls and any enforcement was fair. This identified that businesses welcomed the advice and guidance from the Councils environmental health teams in assisting them to new and developing public health measures.
- Following the national Pye Tate report for building standards, agents were surveyed to obtain their views on the reported slight reduction in user satisfaction and on the future of User Forums that had been poorly attended previously. As a result, the User Forums have been replaced with regular newsletters and a single MS Teams Agents Group, rather than 4 individual annual face-to-face meetings. In addition to support customers, a guide to “Do You Need a Building Warrant” was developed and published on the [Councils website](#)

**13. Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 (STPR2)**

This review of the strategic transport network’s performance will inform transport investment in Scotland for the next 20 years (2022-2042) by providing evidence-based recommendations on which Scottish Ministers can base future transport investment decisions. STPR2 offered the opportunity for Economic Development Department to lobby for improvements to the Argyll and Bute transport network, to be delivered at a national level through, the Strategic Transport Project Review 2.

**14. Taxi Fares Review**

A review was conducted during 2021/22. In terms of Section 17 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, the Local Authority requires to fix maximum fares and other charges in connection with the hire of taxis operating in their area and to review the scales for taxi fares and other charges on a regular basis. The review process commenced in summer 2021 and as a result it was proposed that there would be increases to the existing scales. This was advertised with responses invited within a month. Adverts were placed in local newspapers with a deadline given for any responses. After review of the responses the Head of Legal & Regulatory Supports and the Chair of the Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee (PPSL) agreed subsequent increases to the current fares.

**15. Customer Supplier and Contract Surveys**

Procurement, Commercial and Contract Management Team conduct regular Customer and Supplier Surveys. The feedback from our Customers on previous surveys was very positive in areas such as obtaining advice and assistance, awareness of contracts available and goods or services accurately corresponded to requirements. The feedback from our Suppliers was also positive with an increase in supplier satisfaction in knowing where to find contract opportunities, clearly defined performance measures, attending regular meetings to ensure effective contract delivery and happy with the way the Council engages with their business over the term of the contract.

#### **16. Council's Procurement Strategy**

Procurement, Commercial and Contract Management Team carried out wide consultation on the Council's Procurement Strategy – received wide ranging responses and addressed each one in reporting to Council on refreshed Strategy.

#### **17. Food and Energy Insecurity**

We asked what could be done to reduce the numbers of people relying on foodbanks for support during the pandemic. Foodbank providers advised us through the Argyll and Bute Community Food Forum that more welfare rights and fuel poverty related support and advice for people with food insecurity attending the foodbanks would be beneficial. We continued to deliver the Argyll and Bute Flexible Food Fund which incentivises people in hardship to get this professional advice by making two monthly payments to families, the first one before the referral is made for professional support and the second one after the support has been delivered. This maximised engagement and helped find significantly more benefits for families in hardship.

In response to increasing energy costs, we have built on the success of the Flexible Food Fund to introduce an additional support called Heat Your Home, Manage Rising Costs to work in partnership with advice agencies in the area to provide a joined-up support service for families living in fuel poverty.

#### **18. Social Care**

We are engaging with the Scottish Government across several work streams aimed at supporting the sustainability of social care and reducing social care charges for service users. These are related to the proposed introduction of the National Care Service and a review focused on a proposal to remove charging for non-residential care, both of which came out of the Review of Adult Social Care.

#### **19. Gaelic Needs and Requirements**

In 2021, we ran a Community Gaelic Research Survey to understand Scottish Gaelic needs and requirements across Argyll and Bute from people with no knowledge of Gaelic as well as for fluent speakers. Under the National Gaelic Plan, there should be more opportunities for communities and networks of Gaelic speakers of all kinds to use Gaelic and increased use of the language in community activities and services and the survey, together with the Argyll Gaelic Gathering, held in 2022 supported that aspiration.

The Community Gaelic Research Survey had 1,300 respondents. The responses helped frame the priorities for a programme of work to be led by the Gaelic Development Officer working in partnership with communities and partners. This includes:

- Support for the development of community hubs where Gaelic can be shared
- Need for the provision of information and raising awareness of resources available to help learners

Full details of the survey response can be found on the council 'You said, We Did' page.

The Argyll Gaelic Gathering consisted of three events and also an art project. Adults and young people across Argyll and Bute and Scotland were involved. The Argyll Gaelic Gathering was supported with funding from Bòrd na Gàidhlig. The Gathering is a commitment by Argyll and Bute Council as part of their Gaelic Language Plan and aims to be delivered every two years. The organisation of the Gathering was led by the Council's Gaelic Development Worker (a post jointly funded by the Council and Bòrd na Gàidhlig) and was the product of a collaborative working group which included Argyll and Bute Council, Comunn na Gàidhlig, CHARTS, Fèisean nan Gàidheal, Furan Gaelic Centre, Helensburgh Gaelic Group and Ionad Chaluim Chille Ìle.

#### **20. Craignure Pier**

We consulted on both the short and long term options earlier this year. As a result of feedback we are developing further 3D projections of the possible options to allow communities to better understand the proposals.

#### **21. Customer Satisfaction and Insight Surveys**

The Customer Engagement Team operates a number of automated customer satisfaction and customer insight surveys that allow customers to provide input on the quality of customer service and elements that could be improved or enhanced. Surveys include:

- a. A pop up satisfaction/feedback survey on the website
- b. An automated quality survey put on acknowledgements after online forms have been completed
- c. A "what else would you like to see on the website" survey after website interactions
- d. An automated customer satisfaction survey offered to callers on certain lines in to the Customer Service Centre
- e. A quality of service survey offered to every person who registered a birth, death or marriage with our Registration Service
- f. A complaints handling procedure satisfaction survey.

#### **22. Positive Feedback**

Whilst there has been no formal customer consultation from during this period, the Communication Team has received positive feedback from the campaigns we have run and communications that we have sent out.