NAME OF SERVICE: DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

PERIOD: FINANCIAL YEAR 2020/21

1. 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 BO102: We Provide Support, Prevention And Opportunities To Help People Make Better Lifestyle Choices.

a) Covid public health control measures

The Covid pandemic and the public health control measures, including lockdown, significantly impacted on all aspects of everyday life. New statutory powers were placed on local authorities and Police Scotland to regulate the public health restrictions across businesses, domestic dwellings, and public areas. In response, the Council developed a memorandum of Understanding with Police Scotland to coordinate enforcement activity and agree priorities, an enforcement strategy (4 E's- engage, educate, encourage and enforcement) and authorised officers from Regulatory Services, including environmental health, and trading standards officers to carry out this work. Over the period from March 2020, the Council have aimed to support business to ensure that they have appropriate guidance and advise to be "Covid safe" and to ensure that business that were not permitted to open remained closed. This approach has achieved high levels of compliance, protecting public health in controlling any potential spread of Covid infection. This works continues to promote and secure compliance, and re-emphasising the FACTS messages. This work has been demanding and challenging and over this period, and environmental health and trading standards officers have been in direct contact with 2780 businesses to assess their Covid measures, responded to there has been a total of officer contact with 2780 businesses, investigated 896 complaints from the public about businesses, provided advice via website, through businesses groups, Business Gateway and through specific business enquiries. Revisits were carried out to 456 businesses and there were 23 instances where formal enforcement or Prohibition notices were required to cease business activities.

Business Outcome BO103: We Enable A Choice Of Suitable Housing Options

a) Homeless Preventions and Empty Properties

The Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Scheme was put on hold from March to July 2020 due to lockdown restrictions. Coming back from lockdown was challenging, with negotiation required with the Scottish Government regarding safe travel and accommodation for the scheme contractor, who are based out with of Argyll and Bute. By working with the Scottish Government, agreement was reached to extend the 2019/20 budget until 30th November 2020 to ensure that the full budget awarded was spent, with a total of 287 households receiving insulation measures through the Council's programme

and another 131 private owners in mixed tenure blocks receiving external wall insulation in conjunction with Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA).

Close working with the Scottish Government has ensured that additional funding has been made available, with £2.3 million of additional funding being awarded to support insulation works with ACHA in 2020/21. The Area Based Scheme programme has been on hold again from 26th December 2020 to 26th April 2021, as the majority of works were deemed non-essential construction (limited external works were able to progress). At this time, the 2020/21 budget has been extended until 31st August 2021 to allow as much work to progress as possible with a full programme of works planned for the summer.



b) Delivering Affordable Housing

Despite lockdown, the first completions of the next significant 300 unit phase at the strategic Dunbeg Development have been handed over with 38 units. A large amount of preparatory work has also been undertaken during the year such that LINK are on track to complete handover of the entire 300 unit phase by the end of 2021/22 financial year. This is Argyll and Bute's biggest investment in social housing in decades that will directly contributing to health of the whole housing supply in Oban and wider Lorn. This multi-million pound investment is the culmination of significant cross-public sector partnership working and funding including from Argyll and Bute Council, Scottish Government, Scottish Water, LINK and West Highland Housing Associations. The first completed phase is shown in the photo below with more phases set to be released soon.

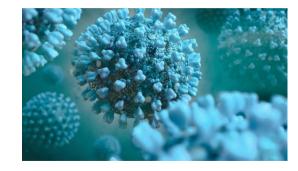


Corporate Outcome - People Will Live In Safer and Stronger Communities

Business Outcome BO104: Our Communities And Supported And Protected.

a) Managing Outbreaks of Communicable Disease and protecting public health.

The well-established incident management procedures which the Council's environmental health service have in place with NHS Highland, through our Joint Health Protection Plan have been implemented in response to Covid outbreaks across Argyll and Bute in the last year. These have successful minimised the spread of the virus by implemented a range of control measures, including direct advice to thousands of local businesses, and have protected public health across Argyll and Bute. Officers have had to show considerable flexibility in approach in dealing with outbreaks (2 or more linked cases) have ranged from small and large community outbreaks to outbreaks involving individual businesses to on board ships.



Business Outcome BO105: Our Natural Environment Is Protected And Respected.

a) Introduction of mobile virtual technology to issue completion certificates

The Council's building standards introduced new technology to allow them to continue to provide a service to customers during lockdown and having to work from home due to Covid restrictions. Using mobile video technology, the team were able to issue completion certificates using remote verification inspections, where the site and works were videoed in real time with the officer. This technology has worked well and will become part of range of options for future work. In some cases, this will reduce the need for onsite inspections, travel and provide a better service to customers in rural areas.



b) Retaining the Customer Standards Excellence award. In 2020/21

The Council Building Standard's service retained the national Customer Service Excellence (CSE) accreditation relating to customer focus with the number of compliance plus increased from 18 to 20 which is considered excellent for a council service. Key points raised during the audit and summarised at the closing meeting by the audit was that there was no impact of the management restructure on CSE award and some improvements have been made, performance has been maintained, the service has used technology well and introduced a range of new measures (including Remote Verification Inspections) to ensure that the customer process during Covid was seamless. There was a strong element of team work, testament to the building standards team that continued their service and improved it during a global pandemic.





Corporate Outcome - Our Economy is diverse and thriving

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

a) Candle-maker unlocks scent-sational growth with Business Gateway support (November 2020)



2014-20 Structural Funds Programme.

A bespoke candle maker has been able to accelerate the growth of her business and take on new premises after Business Gateway helped the team secure funding through the Business Gateway Local Growth Accelerator Programme.

Founded in 2019 by Hazel MacCormick, Lismore Luminations is a business based on the Isle of Lismore that designs and manufactures soy candles and ancillary products with unique scents inspired by the magnificent local scenery.

Business Gateway worked with Hazel after she experienced increased demand for her products. As well as providing support from a business adviser, they were able to signpost her to funding opportunities and help her access a growth grant from the Local Growth Accelerator Programme. The Business Gateway Local Growth Accelerator Programme is funded by Argyll and Bute Council and the European Regional Development Fund

Using this grant, Hazel was able to expand production from her kitchen to larger premises, with the aim to provide further employment opportunities on the island long term.

Hazel said: "Before working with Business Gateway I would never have imagined I could turn my hobby into a growing business. With their support, I have been able to access funding, expand into new premises and create a successful brand that I hope will bring jobs to the local community in the future." Through Business Gateway, Hazel was also able to access a range of services including 1:1 support, advice on her business plan and two days of marketing support to help identify potential markets for her business to target which helped expand her customer base across mainland Scotland and the UK. She also engaged with DigitalBoost, Scotland's national digital training programme, delivered by Business Gateway.

The combination of funding and business support services has resulted in the development and creation of new candle scents and products. "When the pandemic hit I had to adapt my business as I was no longer able to attend markets or sell in shops. With the support of Business gateway I was able to develop my online sales via my website site. The one to one support has been invaluable to help navigate social network marketing.

Angela Vernel, business adviser for Business Gateway, said: "The Argyll and Bute Local Growth Accelerator Programme has been highly effective in facilitating the growth of Lismore Luminations, and it's fantastic to see how Hazel has had the confidence to build her brand, develop new products and expand."

"We know that throughout this pandemic, people have been taking time to evaluate what they want to do with their careers. Hazel's story shows that it's possible to take your hobby and make it into a thriving business, especially if you reach out and access the range of support available."

b) Fish and chip shop bring home the catch after DigitalBoost support (October 2020)

An award-winning fish and chip shop takeaway in Argyll and Bute has adapted to Covid restrictions with the creation of a new website and introduction of online ordering, following support from DigitalBoost, Scotland's national digital training programme, delivered by Business Gateway.

The Wee Kelpie is a world-renowned fish and chip shop established in 2011. Led by husband and wife team Nicola and Kerr Raeburn, the business closed at the start of lockdown to ensure the health and safety of their team.

Following this, Nicola and Kerr approached Business Gateway to identify how they could adapt their business model to reopen in the safest way possible and limit their exposure to the public to reduce the spread of the virus.

Through DigitalBoost, The Wee Kelpie accessed 1:1 support, including expert advice as they started building their first website. Nicola was supported as she went through appointing a web developer, with Business Gateway input to the plan and brief helping to ensure the website met their business needs.

Business Gateway was also able to signpost funding opportunities, and the Wee Kelpie secured funding through the Business Gateway Local Growth Accelerator Programme, towards their new website and the necessary equipment needed to adapt their operations. 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.

Nicola said: "Before the pandemic, we relied on footfall and word of mouth to drive sales. After deciding to close, we knew we had to explore other ways of operating and Business Gateway was there to help take us through this process.

"Through DigitalBoost, we were able to access expert, impartial help which was invaluable as we started the process of building a website. It was particularly helpful as we searched for a web-developer to support us, as I received several quotes and conflicting advice from design agencies. However, our DigitalBoost consultant was friendly, knowledgeable, and explained things clearly to us, outlining what we needed to do to adapt and launch a new platform."

Jen Smith, Business Adviser for Business Gateway Argyll and Bute, said: "It is rewarding to see how this package of support has come together for Nicola and team and assisted their safe reopening.



"Having a strong online presence will continue to be vital for businesses and for many this can be daunting, especially if this is something they haven't done before. However, the DigitalBoost programme can help, providing free, expert, impartial advice to support businesses as they take their operations online, and our Local Growth Accelerator Programme remains open to those looking to grow."

c) Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) / Community Hub in Dunoon

Clyde Mission funding to the value of £490k was secured in December 2020 for to repurpose a council building in Dunoon into a STEM / Community Hub. This has been bolstered by £50k of funding from the council and a further £100k for digital connectivity from Crown Estates Scotland monies. Project development and delivery of this Hub during 2021/22 will act as a pilot for delivery of the other STEM Hubs proposed with the Rural Skills Accelerator Programme proposition within the Rural Growth Deal.

The key focus of the project is to create a flexible structural, digitally connected, space (with plug and play facilities) to meet the lifelong learning needs of the community and partners.

d) Fair Start Scotland (FSS)

A participant signed up for FSS after making contact with the Employability Team's Key Worker to discuss what help was available, participant had heard about the service through a post on the Argyll & Bute Council web page. He signed up straightaway as he was keen to have the support as soon as possible

The participant had been on Universal Credit since losing his job about a year before, he had also suffered family bereavement which was impacting on his health and he was missing a daily routine and contact with others.

Induction, Employment Diagnostic Assessment (EDQ) and Better Off Calculator (BOC) were all completed and discussed with participant, he was job ready and keen to make applications to any suitable local job. The Key Worker agreed to pay for his CSCS (construction) card test to be completed and set up a date for the test with Argyll College as he felt this would open doors to the Wind Farm sites. He had more focus now and was positive about finding a job so he started to approach employers direct, he spoke to the Co-op who offered him a temporary contract to assist with their increasing delivery service.

The participant is delighted with this offer and accepted immediately. The support, guidance and advice he received on his short time on FSS was very beneficial, he continues to receive in-work support through the Employability Team on a weekly basis.

e) Easing of Town Centre and supporting business

To assist the easing of Covid restrictions in town centres, a Group was established comprising a range of Council services, Police Scotland, Transport Scotland and BID4Oban (who represented business groups across Argyll and Bute). The aim was to open up our town centres safely as restrictions ceased, support business and the wide economy. This group considered and introduced a wide range of cations including guidance relating to queuing outside shop premises, standards of external seating areas for businesses, introduced signage in town centres re-emphasising the FACTS messaging and a fast track licensing system. A particular success was the successful initiative to use public open spaces across our main town centres for temporary use by business free of charge. An example was an area provided to the business group, IsleofButebid, who provided seating and tables for visitors and locals to use in Montague Street, Rothesay. This area was well used and tables and chairs will be set out in the morning by a member of the Isle of Bute Bid event team and returned to the storage area at the close of business. The area was used 84 times over the year and by over 4000 people. Isle of Bute BID commented that "Visitors to the island loved Alfresco and, were very complimentary about it but, more importantly the residents made full use of it many times over. You have to remember that the facility ensured that eateries could remain open and provide take away food and drinks which helped secure the jobs involved. "





A new community space in Rothesay has been welcomed by local residents and visitors to Bute.

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

a) Working with businesses to minimise the disruption of EU Exit

The potential impact of EU Exit to our food manufacturing industry, particularly fish and shellfish, was considerable, with the likelihood that consignments to EU countries would require to be inspected and accompanied by Export Health Certificates (EHC) from Argyll and Bute Council, in the same way as exports to non-EU countries. Working through national groups involving business, other regulators and Scottish/UK Government, arrangements were put into place to try and minimise the disruption on businesses, reduce the considerable workload additional EHC requests would have on local authorities and support the wider economy. As a result, the councils environmental health service engaged with local businesses to ensure that systems were in place to meet their perceived demand, carried out food safety assessments of issued attestation to 9 major export businesses in Argyll and Bute to allow them to use the new commercial hubs which were set up in Scotland to deal with specific consignments and issue EHC's, and introduced a new registration scheme for fishing vessels and inspected 204 local fishing vessels allowing their catch to access the EU market.



Business Outcome BO112: Argyll And Bute Is Promoted To Everyone

a) Lochgilphead Public Realm Project

£540,000 project delivered on time and within budget from January to May 2021. This project has delivered:

- Widened and resurfaced footways using natural stone from a local quarry
- Improved pedestrian road crossings
- New cycle parking and street furniture in the town centre
- More space for pedestrians
- Improved surfaces for anyone with mobility challenges, wheelchair users and prams.

An image of the completed works can be found below at Colchester Square:

The project was managed and delivered by Council and their locally sourced sub-contractors supporting local jobs.

Fully funded by The Scottish Government's Cycling, Walking and Safer Routes Fund (CWSR), Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS) and Transport Scotland's Spaces for People fund, managed by SUSTRANS charity.



b) Shopfront Improvement Grants

Shopfront improvement schemes have been developed for town centres in Argyll and Bute, funded by the Scottish Government through the Town Centre Fund administered by Argyll and Bute Council.

The project directly supports local businesses, visually enhances Argyll's main and key town centres and encourages greater level of footfall into the main shopping streets.

Campbeltown

- The Campbeltown Shopfront Scheme has built upon the success of the Campbeltown Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) and Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) projects by assisting business owners further improve the appearance of the town centre. The scheme comprised of two rounds; 2019 and 2020.
- 34 shopfront improvement grants were awarded for the total amount of £60,000.
- The improvements have also supported Campbeltown in becoming Scotland's Most Improved Place in the 2020 SURF Awards:
- An example is provided below of Harlequin Tearoom. The grant supported the refurbishment of the shopfront:





Dunoon

- The Dunoon Shopfront Scheme has complemented the current Dunoon CARS project by assisting local business owners to further improve the appearance of the town centre.
- 16 shopfront improvement grants were awarded for the total amount of £20,000.
- An example is provided below of The Beauty Box, Dunoon. The grant supported repairs to exterior decoration and new signage:





Region-wide

- The latest shopfront improvement scheme is now underway and includes: Lochgilphead, Ardrishaig, Tarbert, Bowmore, Tobermory, Helensburgh, Cardross, Garelochhead, Rosneath, Kilcreggan.
- 75 shopfront improvement grants were awarded for the total amount of over £150,000.
- Works will be delivered between now and September, with an example below of The Journey, Helensburgh. The grant supported the manufacture, supply and installation of new signage:

The project is managed and delivered by Council and their sub-contractors.

The project is funded by the Scottish Government through the Town Centre Fund which is designed to support small businesses as part of the Covid recovery process.





c) Shop Local

- Argyll and Bute Council is encouraging people to support towns and high streets by shopping locally and working alongside the nation-wide, Scotland Loves Local campaign by offering support to local business owners to help enhance both the online and physical presence of their businesses.
- In 2020, Argyll and Bute Council undertook a community engagement exercise in eight towns, which resulted in the commissioning of locally bespoke messaging for each town or community.
- Images have been produced for each of the region's main towns or key settlements (with the exception of those with Business Improvement Districts). Mull and Islay took forward a whole Island shop local campaign. Example images can be found below:





- Following on from the creation of bespoke Shop Local messaging, the council is currently delivering a number of initiatives designed to enhance the online presence of town centre businesses which include:
 - o Free Google My Business training to increase local businesses online presence
 - o Free Google accredited photography for local businesses to help showcase their offering.

The project is managed and delivered by Council and their sub-contractors.

The projects are funded from Scotland's Towns Partnership Scotland Loves Local Grant that the council won through a competitive process.

2. SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES

The significant challenges faced by the Service during 2020/21. These challenges either created specific pressures on the Success Measures or impacted on delivery. 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

Business Outcome BO103: We Enable A Choice Of Suitable Housing Options.

a) Throughout 2020/21 very significant pressure has been placed on the Council's Homelessness Service as a result of a variety of lockdown measures and implications. Most acutely the Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) were unable to create new tenancies through much of the early lockdown period. This meant people presenting as homeless has no route into RSL stock and required the Council to increase its stock of temporary tenancies. In addition direct effect of Covid relating to places to self-isolate, inability to travel and loss of hospitality related accommodation created an increased demand on the need for temporary accommodation. At the same time lockdown conditions made it demanding on the Council to procure additional temporary accommodation, and the administration of the whole process had to be carried out in a virtual manner. At one stage there were 51 additional rooms in use and this has created an approximate £700k cost to the Council. Despite this extreme circumstances, at no stage has the Council been unable to find accommodation for those in need.

Corporate Outcome - People Will Live In Safer and Stronger Communities

Business Outcome BO104: Our Communities And Supported And Protected.

a) There is considerable work and resources required to restart the official food safety programme in Argyll and Bute. This involves the reassessment of all food businesses, introduction of a new statutory Code of Practice, new requirements relating to food standards and allergens and the introduction of new ICT systems. This will be a challenge to the environmental health team as there will be a requirement for additional resources at a time when there is a national shortage of qualified environmental health and food safety officers.

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

The following are all the consultations and resulting actions that the Service has carried out during this period.

a) In 2020/21, Housing Services carried out a range of consultation exercises/stakeholder engagement in support of the Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) and Local Housing Strategy (LHS).

These included:

- A number of Focus groups/face to face surveys with key client groups and their representatives, & specialist providers/services, such as Gypsy/Travellers, wheelchair users, and Armed Services/Veterans in early 2020, throughout Argyll & Bute.
- Survey and telephone interviews with PRS sector (landlords, letting agents, estate agents/solicitors & tenants etc.) to inform HNDA & affordability analysis
- An early-engagement LHS online survey for partners, local community groups and residents
- A virtual LHS Stakeholder conference in November 2020, with around 50 participants via Microsoft Teams, to develop vision, outcomes & priorities for next LHS
- Staff Review Day for council Housing services & colleagues, in December 2020, refining outputs from above exercises
- 4 LHS Option Appraisal workshops with key partners/stakeholder, in February 2021, to review & refine LHS action plan & targets
- Ongoing engagement with partners via existing structures including the Strategic Housing Forum (SHF), Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP)
 Officers' Group, Energy Efficiency Forum, Housing Support Group, and Housing/Health & Social Care Partnership locality groups, generally on quarterly basis

The outputs from this consultation & engagement activity helped to inform the overarching HNDA and the development of the next LHS which will be circulated in draft format for wider public consultation over the summer of 2021 with a view to being completed and implemented by end of year.

b) In 20/21, we asked fish and shellfish exporters whether they required support to develop their preparedness plans for EU Exit, their plans for exporting to the EU after the 31st December 2020 and for their comments on the revision of the small quantities charge for export health certificates. As a result, The Council:

- Listened to the views of business and revised its export health certificate charges for small quantities from 5kg to 60kg for food consignments which were intended for export.
- Specific arrangements were made with businesses to ensure that they were able to access services for export health certificates to allow them to continue to access the EU market.
- Environmental health service to audit specific business who wished to use the new commercial hubs for export purposes and issued attestations to allow them to do so based on a full audit of their safety management systems.

DEVELOPMENT & ECONOMIC GROWTH – ANNUAL SCORECARD 2020/21



