

# Cascade

NOVEMBER 2020



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# Chief Executive Update

The sun is shining (just about) as I write this, which is lovely to see. Winter puts a whole new importance on lunch breaks if your working day now starts and finishes when it's dark – making a point of getting out at lunch time when it's still light can help brighten winter months. You can find more information about staying winter well at the end of this Cascade.



Pippa Milne,  
Chief  
Executive

Work continues on planning how the council can work best in the long term, given COVID restrictions. Working from home is still what's expected of anyone who can do that. Even if guidance on this changes, physical distancing will cut the number of people who can work in offices.

# Chief Executive Update

We are looking at different options, for example creating 'hub' offices, for meetings, printing or other occasional uses. We are taking into account what employees and managers have told us would suit you.

There's a huge amount to consider so we have put together a project team to manage this change. It's being led overall by Ross McLaughlin, Head of Commercial Services, and Jane Fowler, Head of Customer Support Services. Look out for more updates as we progress.

Budget planning continues too. We don't expect to know our Scottish Government funding allocation until January next year, but need to prepare now for making savings to balance our budget in February. Reports will go to the Policy and Resources Committee on 10 December and I will provide more information about that next week.



Pippa Milne,  
Chief  
Executive

# Chief Executive Update

I know how hard employees of this council work every day for Argyll and Bute.

I know too that efforts often go unnoticed. Producing podcasts is one of the steps I am taking to make your work more visible and so to help get the recognition and credit you deserve.

You can listen in on the council's website:

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/pippas-podcast>

If you would like to join me, and talk about your work, please do let me know – [workingtogether@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:workingtogether@argyll-bute.gov.uk) or call 01546 604171.

Thank you as always for the fantastic work you are doing for Argyll and Bute.



Pippa Milne,  
Chief  
Executive

# Making every pound matter

Spending no more than we need to, and raising income where possible are two key steps in protecting services and jobs from cuts in council budgets.

Colin Rae and Isla Binnie, our Counter Fraud Officers, are here to help protect service budgets.

The council spends money in lots of different ways, from contracts and grants to administering benefits. It also raises money through various routes including council tax.

Colin and Isla are here to help ensure that benefits only go to the people who need them, that the council gets the right council tax income, and that services spend no more than they need to so budgets go further.

If Colin or Isla could help you, or you want to know more about the work of our Counter Fraud team, you are welcome to contact them at [fraud@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:fraud@argyll-bute.gov.uk) or call 01546 604789.



Laurence  
Slavin,  
Interim Head  
of Financial  
Services

# Tips for working safely on-line

Every day, many of us depend on email, and other on-line channels to do our work, and we hold a lot of sensitive information on-line.

Our ICT Team works very hard behind the scenes to keep our information safe and our systems working.

In a typical week the systems we have in place stop around 28,000 security attacks from across the world, for example attempts to guess passwords, and they block around 4,000 spam emails and 60 viruses.

We work with government, other national agencies, and the wider cyber security community, to keep up-to-date with threats and solutions.

We can all take steps to protect ourselves from cyber attacks.



Dave  
Ritchie, ICT  
Security and  
Compliance  
Officer

# Tips for working safely on-line

**Do you run a social media account for the council?** Make sure you have easy access to it out-of-hours so that if someone else gets access to it, you can take action quickly to stop damage being done. Get in touch with the Communications Team to ensure arrangements are in place for them to help you quickly if this were to happen – [press@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:press@argyll-bute.gov.uk)



Dave Ritchie,  
ICT Security  
and  
Compliance  
Officer

**Not sure if an email address is genuine?** Hover your mouse over links/sender address to see what they really point to, and check that addresses are correct (eg @hmrc.co.uk instead of the correct @hmrc.gov.uk). If in doubt, report work emails to [security@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:security@argyll-bute.gov.uk) and never click on any links or open any documents in an email you are not sure about.

# Working in a pandemic

Responding to Covid-19 has affected all our work in some way.

Here are another couple of examples of how employees across the council have adapted in order to support local people, businesses and communities.

If you would like to tell us about your service, we'd love to feature you in a future Cascade.

Get in touch at [cascade@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:cascade@argyll-bute.gov.uk)



# Supporting local businesses

Teams across the council have delivered four business support funds, on behalf of the Scottish Government, to assist local businesses impacted by COVID-19 restrictions.

Administered by the Business Gateway and Economic Growth teams, more than 500 applications have been processed, with 378 grants totalling nearly £685k awarded. The recently launched Strategic Framework Business Fund will go on providing support until next March, if business restrictions remain in place.

The teams have been working to tight deadlines, on top of their own workloads, making sure that the processes were in place to deliver brand new schemes in super-quick time, whilst handling significantly higher volumes of enquiries from businesses.

Thanks also to staff in Projects & Regeneration, Non-Domestic Rates, Customer Services, Web Team, Environmental Health, Strategic Finance and Creditors who all played a huge part in delivering these funds effectively to help our local businesses.



Ishabel Bremner,  
Economic  
Growth  
Manager



# Catering and Cleaning

At the start of lockdown arrangements were made to keep some hub schools open across Argyll and Bute for the children of key workers and to provide free school meals for eligible pupils. The Scottish Government issued guidelines covering cleaning regimes and the preparation and serving of food so there was a lot of new information to both understand and share with the team.

All staff took turns working in hubs and we're so pleased and proud to say that no members of the team tested positive for COVID.

Staff also helped with the Community Food project preparing food parcels for people shielding and vulnerable families. There was a huge amount of work to prepare for the return to schools. We rearranged the catering service to work within new school models which was challenging but we delivered a safe and efficient service.

Working in exceptional circumstances has been difficult. Our catering and cleaning staff have surpassed expectations and we would like to say a big thank you for all your hard work.

Andrea Harris, Service Manager



# Get ready for winter

Now that we're in winter, keep yourself safe and plan ahead if you have to travel. Our roads' team is doing all it can to help you.

Workers are up at the crack of dawn to pre-treat over 750 miles of road, over 50% of the entire network. This is the equivalent of driving from Lochgilphead to Paris.

We have people who analyse local weather forecast data so we know by the end of each day what we need to do to make sure the roads are treated appropriately the following morning. Our [daily schedule](#) can help your prepare.

[ROSPA's advice](#) can help you prepare for winter driving.

And see the road conditions on our [live cameras](#) on our website: <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/content/road-cameras>



Photo: Ian Orr



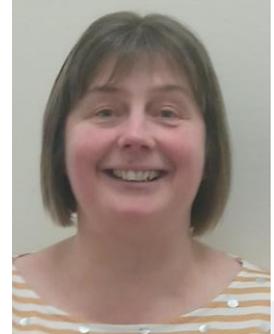
# Congratulations

Well done to the council's training centre – it has received five assessments of excellent from the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), the highest standard possible!

The Training Centre, run by HR & OD, provides SQA courses in social services and healthcare/children and young people, first aid, numeracy, ICT, education support assistance and tele healthcare.

Sharon explains: “We’re here to help employees get and maintain the skills they need. Responding to COVID-19 has meant adapting training where we can so we can deliver more on-line. We work hard to provide a high standard of training so we are delighted with the SQA’s findings.”

For more information contact [trainingcentre@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:trainingcentre@argyll-bute.gov.uk) or 01546 605513 option 3



Sharon  
Atkinson,  
OD Officer  
– Culture  
and Talent

# Winter Wellbeing Tips

With the dark nights closing in, here are a couple of ideas for staying well and positive in winter.

Natural light is a precious commodity in winter so why not follow the **Shine Bright Scotland** campaign and make winter a season of light. This follows what Scandinavian countries do, putting lanterns or fairy lights in your garden and homes to brighten our communities and help us feel the positive effects of light. Find out more about the campaign on Instagram and Facebook. Well done to HR Service Centre Team Leader, Seona Laird's sons, Alexander and Andrew, for their Halloween Shine Bright efforts! (see picture below).

We'd love to feature your Shine Bright photos – send them to [cascade@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:cascade@argyll-bute.gov.uk) Thanks.

Working from home can mean we miss seeing our colleagues. A **“virtual canteen”** is easy to organise using MS Teams or Skype where you and colleagues catch up informally, just as you might have done previously at the kettle. It's a great way to see friendly faces and get all the latest news all while having your cuppa.



Jane Fowler,  
Head of  
Customer  
Support  
Services



# Got news?

If there are successes or news you would like to share, we'd love to hear from you.

Contact us at [cascade@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:cascade@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

