

24th June 2021

POLICY LEADS REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report provides members with an update on key areas of activity for each Policy Lead Councillor. This aims to provide updates from all Policy Leads as regularly as possible, so that all members are informed, up-to-date and able to

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Flexible Fund : The Scottish Government has provided £537,000 of funding for the council, working with the Health and Social Care partnership and the third sector, to deliver projects to support vulnerable people in our communities that were negatively affected by tier 4 lockdown.

- 3.5 Helensburgh Waterfront Development: The council and Heron Bros recently marked the “Topping Out” milestone, when traditionally the structure and roof are completed. Officers and I were able to visit the site again where I had the pleasure of demonstrating my own DIY skill, or lack of, by drilling that final roof screw.

The progress of structural works is impressive and it is reassuring that this £22million flagship project remains on time and budget. Flood defences walls and rock armour are complete as is the steelwork, concrete walls and floors to the two pools.

Public realm works to the former skate park has also started with the concrete steps nearly done. A new electrical sub-station on the former Mariner’s site has been completed too. Internally, mechanical and electrical works are progressing at a pace. So overall, there is excellent progress to

the outputs from the adjudication process with our funding partners. Based on this work we currently estimate the programme duration to be between 40 - 46 weeks and, have also been working with

Boundary Commission Review – it is the Commission’s intention to have completed their review of electoral arrangements in respect of the six Council areas with inhabited islands, including Argyll and Bute, by end June 2021. The proposals arising from these reviews will be considered

YPO Income	£1,142	-	-	-	£1,142
HSCP	(£11,318)	-	(£7,447)	-	(£18,765)
Scottish Proc. Contracts	-	-	-	-	-
Scotland Excel Contracts	-	-	£211,316	-	£211,316
Total	£166,707	£3,446,638	£516,682	£2,150,043	£6,280,070

New Community Benefit Initiative : A review of the way in which community groups can receive a benefit achieved through the Council's procurement process and the related contracts has been undertaken. As a result a new Community Benefits Initiative was launched in September 2020 and, to date, there has been 31 requests made through the new online application process from Community Groups, 3 of which have been taken up and promised by suppliers.

4.5 Community Development: As at May 2021 the following applications have been made:

Oban, Lorn and the Isles	30
Helensburgh and Lomond	18
Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands	21
Bute and Cowal	20

Award recommendation reports have been prepared and will be discussed at Area Committees throughout June 2021.

The council made a decision at their meeting held on 26th November 2020 to agree a time extension until March 2022 for the groups who received the council's Supporting Communities Fund in 2020. A further report is tabled at today's meeting recommending that this is extended further to December 2022. Four groups have contacted the council's Community Planning and Development Service to request a further extension, due to the Covid 19 regulations restricting planned face to face activity and alternative methods being looked at and where there are no alternative methods, time given for the event to take place at its scheduled time in the calendar year.

4.6 Customer Support Services :
 Communications: The Communications Team have been working closely with colleagues to shape and promote messaging around staycations in Argyll and Bute this summer. This has centred on the campaign that the team developed titled - 'Have a Great Time, Be a Great Visitor'. It uses the now well-recognised #abplace2b logo and hashtag.

The campaign is giving practical information and tips to visitors and a paid-for social media advertising campaign, throughout June and July focuses on encouraging people to plan ahead to have a great time here and be a great visitor. The campaign will direct people to the abplace2b website. The team will use analysis of the impact of this campaign to focus any additional promotion on the most effective of those channels.

The team are using #abplace2b Instagram account to support local businesses by looking for appropriate photos from them to share. People follow our account for scenery/wildlife/lifestyle photos which we accompany with messaging about the area being a great place to live and work. This provides the businesses with access to a wider audience with information about their services and products.

It continues to be a busy time for the team from a Covid perspective, as public health information continues to demand a high level of communications involvement.

Registration: The Customer Service Team have been busy with an increase in weddings, now that the restrictions are being lifted. Many people love to come to Argyll and Bute to be married, particularly for outdoor weddings – our beaches are very popular! Many people had delayed or postponed their wedding ceremony during Covid and are now catching up. This is a busy, but very rewarding time for our registrars.

Digital/online: Our website continues to be very well used, with an overall satisfaction rate of 87% and as a result of our increased use of automated payments, auto-directed calls and web or voice payments, we continue to see 'channel shift' to automated and self-service customer transactions instead of face to face or telephone. This is better for the customer, as it means 24/7 access to services and that our Customer Service Agents

The team are taking a leading role on the people elements of the Our Modern Workplace project, having just completed the third employee survey on home working. It was important to ask employees what their experiences of home working are a year on from Lockdown. Over 70% have told us that they wish to continue working from home in the future, at least some of the time. We have heard from employees that home working improves work life balance, reduces time on commuting and for some people, aids their concentration. Many would like to spend some time in the workplace, but enjoy flexibility.

We recognise that this is not the case for all employees, and those who do not have the appropriate space or environment for home working are a priority for working from an office. The next steps will be to work on updating our supporting HR policies, whilst supporting the project manager to engage with teams on a location by location basis, to reach the optimum configuration of office space for the future.

ICT: The ICT team continue to work on a wide range of applications and improvements. We are working to increase the bandwidth available to improve overall ICT performance, MS365 implementation is continuing, gradually looking to activate all the different functions that are available. A high profile issue has been cyber security, with a number of public sector bodies having been targeted with Ransomware. This has been elevated to a red risk in our operational risk register. 94% of all cyber-attacks come in through email and over 90% of them are due to human error, including setting a weak password. So the message is – never open an attachment in an email you think may be suspicious, make your passwords impenetrable and if in doubt, call the ICT team.

5. POLICY LEAD FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE Æ Councillor Kieron Green

5.1: HSCP Leadership: Fiona Davies, who has previously worked within NHS Highland has been appointed as Interim Chief Officer for the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP). It is expected that she will be in post for around a year from May 2021 until permanent arrangements can be made to fill this post. I thank George Morrison for again stepping in to provide continuity during the transition between Joanna MacDonald's departure and Fiona's arrival, and would like to formally welcome Fiona to Argyll and Bute HSCP.

5.2 Local Activities : The HSCP Audit and Risk Committee met on 20th April, with reports on Internal Audit, Charging for Non-Residential Care Services and Risk Management Strategy.

The HSCP Finance and Policy Committee on 23rd April and 21st May discussed progress with Service Transformations, COVID-19 costs, Financial Risks, updates on Children and Families and Older Adult and Community Hospital Savings, including the Jura Respite Flat.

appointments and the new members of the team will join in August, September and October respectively.

Officers have worked closely with colleagues in UNISON and Unite the Union to find a resolution to the issue of Social Work Emergency Service. A position has been agreed and the unions will be balloting their members with a recommendation to accept the offer. The Chief Social Work Officer is leading a project to identify and implement a long term, more sustainable approach to this service, working with colleagues nationally and in the Islands councils.

The £500 bonus for health and social care staff across Scotland in recognition of work during the pandemic has now been paid to all relevant employees from the council.

Culture and wellbeing projects, including wellness events and Time to

Notification has been received that a Joint Inspection of Adult Support and Protection services in Argyll and Bute will commence 2nd August, across social work, health, and the police. This will include:

- A staff survey relevant to those employed by these organisations and providers

- Reviewing the position statement and supporting documentation

- Reading of records of a sample of adults at risk of harm – both individuals not requiring any further intervention beyond initial referral, and those who have been subject of procedures

- The engagement of front line and senior managers in focus groups, to discuss the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on practice

- 5.6 Children and Young People : The Year 1 review of the Children and Young People's Services Plan (CYPSP) 2020-23 has been considered by Community Services Committee and the IJB. Included were updates on short-term 2020/21 progress, information on quality improvement projects and developments, and plans for coming year.

As part of the Recovery and Renewal Fund for Mental Health, one off funding has been allocated by the Scottish Government in order to improve CAMHS following COVID-19. Locally this will support reducing waiting times for those on CAMHS and psychological therapies waiting lists. Additionally, and with the expectation that some of this funding is to become permanent, a recruitment plan to support implementation of national service specifications and expansion of services up to the age of 25 years is being progressed.

Argyll and Bute Child Protection Committee was one of seven participating in an analysis of performance data during the pandemic. This was carried out by Social Work Scotland (SWS) in association with the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care (CELCIS) at Strathclyde University and the Care Inspectorate. The first draft report noted trends of decreases across Scotland, including Argyll and Bute, in children and young people assessed as at risk of significant harm and becoming care experienced. It is expected however that these numbers will gradually return to pre-pandemic levels over the course of the next year.

Work of the Child Protection Committee has included monitoring and reviewing implementation of the Children (Equal Protection from Assault)(Scotland) Act 2019 which came into effect on 7th November 2020.

Also being progressed is planning for the Scottish Child Interview Model. This aims to reduce the numbers of children and young people required to appear in court as witnesses. Argyll and Bute, along with other rural and island areas are participating in groups supporting the introduction of new

national standards of interviewing, and a training programme for Social Workers and Police Scotland colleagues.

- 5.7 Criminal Justice : Justice Social Work Services are continuing using a blended approach of face to face and telephone contact depending on assessed levels of risk, need and vulnerability. During the pandemic work has been affected by restrictions on opening of courts, home leaves, and prison visits.

With lockdown easing demand for services has increased, while courts continue to deal with a reduced level of business. As a result backlog has formed which it is expected may take a number of years to clear.

To speed up business reports are being submitted to Court 48 hours in advance, which has reduced the time available to complete these. At present this has been working well, but this will continue to be monitored. Additional Court days are to be scheduled from September onwards also,

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on how we will use our office spaces in future, taking account of Covid related measures and recent budget decisions that will eventually see us using fewer council buildings.

A Project Board has been established, with Terms of Reference, governance structure, and a stakeholder engagement strategy having been agreed.

An implementation plan is currently being prepared by the Board, which will be heavily influenced by the outcome of the recent staff survey undertaken in May 2021. The results of the survey are being analysed and a programme of engagement meetings will be arranged with Heads of Service, 3rd tier managers and team leaders throughout June and July to better understand individual service/team needs moving forward. Engagement with TUs will also be arranged as part of this process, which will allow detailed designs to be started to determine office layout and set up.

Universal Free School Meals: The service have set up a Project Team to begin putting in place arrangements for implementing Universal Free School Meals. At present all P1 to P3 pupils receive free school meals and this will be extended to P4 from August 2021 and then for the remainder of primary pupils from August 2022. Capital and revenue funding will be made available from the Scottish Government to assist with implementing this policy, however the service will need to review capacity, equipment and operational/staffing arrangements within each school. It is likely that a number of school kitchens will require to be developed to cope with the increased provision of meals. At the higher end of the spectrum it is forecast that meal numbers could increase from 8,000 to 16,000 per day.

Connected Kitchens : The Catering and Cleaning Service have been approached to participate in a 'Connected Kitchen' pilot, which focusses on using wireless monitoring within kitchens to provide a number of benefits to staff and customers, while tackling climate change, improving food safety and delivering cost savings.

For a remote and rural local authority like Argyll and Bute, the benefits could be instant, for example, if meals are delivered to an Early Years Partner Provider, we require them to monitor and check the food temperatures when reheating and serving the meals to children, to ensure that the food is safe. By monitoring the temperatures remotely, the safety of food can be assured and, if issues are identified, staff can be supported or trained to prevent future issues. A working group has been set up with up Falcon Foodservice and Koolzone, with a view to identifying some test

areas for monitoring, prior to deciding whether to progress on a long term basis.

One Council: The service continue to make good progress in terms of proactively managing property development, rent reviews the efficient use of heritable property. During the last period a number of leases and sales have been concluded on surplus property/assets, including Blairvadach House, Cabbies Rest in Rothesay, Chalmers Street Ardrishaig, land on Tiree and Tobermory. The total income from capital receipts over the last 3 financial years is £5.5M, which meets the capital target set for this period.

6.4 Projects and Regeneration:

Hermitage Park – delighted that the lease has now been signed for the Hermitage Park Pavilion Café and the café is up and running and proving very popular with visitors to the park. A Service Level Agreement has been developed with UHI to deliver the practical element of their horticultural training in the Park and the first trainee is already in and using the Park. The recent funding request submitted to NLHF has been successful. This will allow a 1year extension to the project end date to allow full delivery of all outcomes including the activity plan. The Friends of Hermitage Park ran an Azalea Festival in the Park in April, raising funds

7.2 Roads Capital Reconstruction Programme : This year's £10M Roads Capital Reconstruction Programme is well underway with works being delivered across many locations. As per previous years, the model the Council has adopted is the mixed economy model where the council carries out the majority of the work directly and uses specialist contractors for surface dressing together with local SMEs for specific pieces of work and also to supplement the Council's workforce as and when required.

It is worth reminding colleagues across the chamber that this year's

services which would help to maintain service provision in more rural and isolated areas with a model which is likely to be more cost effective.

- 7.6 EV Charging: I was delighted with the Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy that was considered and approved by the ED&I Committee on 3 June.

- 8.1 SQA: The First Minister announced on 4 January and 6 February 2021 that schools would be closed to most learners until at least 22 February and that remote learning would take place during this time. Consequently, the SQA developed a revised

Feedback from schools and pupils has been very positive, with drinking

feedback received from Eco Schools Scotland was excellent and highlighted the wonderful work undertaken by their ECO Committee and the whole school community, even during lockdown. The chosen topics selected by the school were litter, food and the environment and health and wellbeing. Examples of work from the school have been highlighted as good practice and may be used on the Eco-Schools' Website.

Pupils at Dalintober Primary School and ELC have also been busy achieving their 6th Green Flag from Eco Schools Scotland. This has been achieved through their sustainable education work, both as part of the daily curriculum and through extra-curricular activities.

A huge well done and congratulations to all involved.

9. POLICY LEAD FOR PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES Æ Councillor David Kinniburgh

9.1 Planning Applications:

- 9.4 Consultation Update : The feedback from the recent on-line consultation in relation to the Argyll and Bute Technical Working Note has still to be considered by officers and when completed will be reported to a future meeting of the Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee (PPSL).
- 9.5 PPSL Training : PPSL training recommenced o

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 This report provides members with an update on each of the Policy Lead portfolios. Policy Lead Councillors will be happy to discuss any particular issues with colleagues as required.

Argyll and Bute Council Policy Lead Councillors Report 14th June 2021

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