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## OUR SUCCESSES

Corporate Outcome 1 People Live Active Healthier And Independent Lives

As a result of rapidly implementing these actions not only did we support our most vulnerable customers in a variety of ways, the service delivery targets we had originally set ourselves for the following indicators - 'call resolution at first point of contact' and call waiting times were fully met.

We developed a weekly news roundup to keep people informed and connected. As well as our regular features on Council service updates, jobs and consultations we also provided information on a wide range of available support during lockdown, from guidance on staying healthy, to sources of support for individuals, families and businesses. Our subscribers increased by 10% and as the following examples of feedback show, this helped address the social consequences of isolation.

¾ "Your weekly news is a godsend, alone, keeping me in touch, great format."

¾ "Thank you for such regular, concise, clear newsletters. So comforting to know we in isolation are included in outside life! And I trust it!"

¾ "Thank you, the updates are so helpful especially keeping those of us who don't get out up to date"

Across the Council staff were redeployed and worked with partners and volunteers on the logistics and coordination of the Community Food project. From a standing start in March 2020 10.7.0.1 Tf - (u)-0.7-3.3 (s).g tff



Some community groups had spontaneously come together as a result of the Covid Pandemic. Work was done to build rapport and provide support and direction where required. This was an excellent partnership project which was delivered by working with community organisations. Keep up to date with the rapidly changing Covid guidance. Community groups needed effective communication channels. Working together ensured that groups were supported with relevant guidance, funding advice and volunteer support as required, for example, one volunteering policies, safe medication delivery process, insurance and confidentiality guidance.

We also provided capacity building sessions for community groups. This included providing a forum for information exchange, support with relevant regulations and help.





Our partnership working with private and third sector nurseries along with our growing relationship with child minders has enabled us to offer parents access to a range of attendance patterns and settings to ensure that families and our youngest children are well supported.

#### Outdoor learning

In response to delivering almost double the hours of Early Learning and Childcare the service developed a vision and strategy to ensure that our children are receiving a minimum of 50% of their ELC time in high quality outdoor learning.

An intense package of professional learning support for staff, including the development of our own SQA verified qualification, has ensured staff have the skills, knowledge and confidence to deliver on this vision. All staff and children have also been supplied with suitable outdoor clothing to ensure they are comfortable in learning and playing outdoors.

As part of this vision we are delighted to have supported the opening of a new Outdoor Nursery in the walled garden of our Council Headquarters and look forward to opening another in Dunoon which will become a training centre for our own qualification.

#### Progress and Achievement

All schools across the authority are engaging with the Progress and Achievement module at 3 points each year- October, February and June. At each of these points teachers of pupils from P1 to S3 enter data relating to every child's progress in literacy and numeracy within the Curriculum for Excellence level at which they are currently working.

The data is then used to develop planning and individualised targets for pupil and identified groups. The data is analysed at school and authority level to ensure excellence and equity in provision. The authority also uses the data to inform improvement planning with schools and clusters.

#### Financial Support

Over the last 12 months there has been a 15% increase in uptake of clothing grants. The full application process for applying for grants is now carried out online, this has enabled processing during the pandemic to continue and at the same time is very simple to use.

TARGET FOR 2020/21	ACTUAL FOR 2020/21	PERFORMANCE
Clothing Grant 1464	Clothing Grant 1724	<b>GREEN ABOVE TARGET</b>
Free School Meals 928	Free School Meals 1071	<b>GREEN ABOVE TARGET</b>
Education Maintenance Allowance 273	Education Maintenance Allowance 203	

Free School Meal (FSM) grants have seen an increase in uptake by 33%. This is linked to the pandemic and the situation that families found themselves in over the last 12 months. Payments were made to families for FSMs over the holiday periods last year and additional hardship payments of £100 were made to families receiving FSMs in December and March. This also enticed more families to apply for this grant.

Whilst other grant uptake has increased over the last 12 months, the uptake of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) has reduced by 29% despite writing directly to students to take advantage of this grant. One reason for this may be the reduced number of school days that students were in school during the Academic Year.

During the last year we have made the application for EMA electronic to simplify the process for applicants and hopefully the uptake will increase in the next Academic year. 05/11/2021 14:02:00 (M. J. T. B. E. Q. a. 38. 04 264. 96) JTJ

### Counselling services linked to schools

A counselling service has now been established with a team lead and 7.5fte counsellors. The Educational Psychology Service and Health and Social Care Partnership (HSP) managers have worked together with the research assistant and counselling service team lead to develop practice guidance, referral procedures and an evaluation framework for this newly developed service.

This well qualified and experienced team of counsellors provides a valuable Tier 1 service with clear routes for escalation of need to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) services where required. From links with other local authorities it appears that Argyll and Bute has been more successful in attracting a large number of suitably qualified applicants to deliver this service to our children and young people from the age of 10 years up.

Since February 2021 almost 100 referrals have been received across all ten of our secondary schools and their associated primaries with counselling being delivered remotely to young people where the referral criteria is met and alternative supports provided where more appropriate.

### Food For Life

The Council has once again been recognised for offering fresh, healthy and sustainable school lunches, and were awarded the Soil Association Scotland's Bronze Food For Life Served Here award, which is 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 and high welfare meat. We source food from the local area for school meals so that children benefit from freshly prepared, sustainable meals. The catering service sees 4,300 Food for Life accredited meals a day.

### Direct delivery of free school meals

Pupils entitled to free school meals were supported when they were learning at home throughout the pandemic. The catering service offered a flexible response that evolved over time, moving from directly delivered hot meals to a range of options including pre-prepared meals and sandwiches. The catering service has seen a significant increase in the number of pupils receiving free school meals since the start of the pandemic.



phase 1 involvement. The responsible person or group of staff attended a 3 day leadership course delivered by the Educational Psychology Service. A Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum achievement structure has been developed for schools which includes a framework and accreditation toolkit to support acquisition of each level.

#### Delivering Online Training To Community Groups

Due to the pandemic the Community Planning and Development (CPD) training programme was redesigned to be delivered as online sessions. Prior to Covid each course was delivered face to face.

To help people access the online platform straightforward guides with screenshots were created and were used to deliver the training. Trial sessions were offered for anyone who had a personal or professional interest in the CPD programme.

## Supporting Local Businesses

We worked alongside other Council colleagues to support the

also engaged with DigitalBoost, Scotland's national digital training programme, delivered by Business Gateway.

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."

The combination of funding and business support services 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 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."

Supporting People And Businesses: Fish and chip shop bring the catch

An awardwinning fish and chip shop takeaway in Argyll and Bute has adapted to Covid restrictions with the

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 Keir and assisted their safe reopening. Having a strong onli

## Minimising the disruption of EU Exit

The potential impact of EU Exit to our food manufacturing industry particularly fish and shellfish, was considerable. The likelihood was that consignments to EU countries would require to be inspected and accompanied by Export Health Certificates (EHC) from Argyll and Bute Council, which is the same as exports to non-EU countries. Working through national groups involving business, other regulators and Scottish/UK Government, arrangements were put in place to try and minimise the disruption on businesses, support the wider economy and reduce the considerable workload additional EHC requests would have on local authorities.

The Council's environmental health team engaged with local businesses to ensure that systems were in place to meet expected demand. The team carried out food safety assessments and issued attestation to 9 major export businesses in Argyll and Bute. This allowed them to use the new commercial hubs which were set up in Scotland to deal with specific consignments and issue EHC's.

A new registration scheme for fishing vessels was introduced and 204 local fishing vessels were inspected allowing their catch to access the EU market.

### Shopfront Improvement Schemes and Shop Local Initiatives

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



## 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.

$\frac{3}{4}$  16 shopfront improvement grants were awarded for the total amount of £20,000.

$\frac{3}{4}$  An example is provided below of The Beauty Box, Dunoon. The grant supported repairs to exterior decoration and new signage:

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## Corporate Outcome 6 We Have An Infrastructure That Supports Sustainable Growth

Continuing to deliver the Capital Plan

During 2020/21 the following projects within the Council's Capital Plan were being delivered by the Programme and Project Management Services Team:

- ¾ Oban Tansit Berthing Facility.
- ¾ ObanMaritime Visitor Facility.
- ¾ Dunoon Queens Hall Refurbishment.
- ¾ Rothesay Pavilion Adaptive Restoration: The original completion date was FQ2 2019/20 however, the main contractor went into administration with works nominally 70% Complete. Work is underway to agree a replacement contractor to in order to progress the project with a revised completion date of FQ3 2021/22.
- ¾ Helensburgh Waterfront Development The main contract was awarded to Heron Bros Ltd on 14 July 2020 and works started on 10/11/2020. The project is currently on hold due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The project is expected to be completed in FQ3 2021/22.



expanded and redeveloped as a single site for all Roads and Infrastructure Operations across Oban and Lorn. The three depots are Ob Mill Park, Jackson's Quarry and the Appin depot.

Moving from three depots to one reduces the Council's operating costs. The main contract was delivered by Luddon Construction whose squads stayed in Oban MThurand.pro.3 (q)-0.8 (u)-0[(d)5.3 (9.y)3.4 i.qsq37 0 Td

A simple but effective communications exercise was implemented which saw local businesses and other interested parties provided with regular weekly updates via email, as well as populating online resources via the Council's website. This is a tried and tested method first used during the Helensburgh CHORD works and ensures we keep businesses informed as to how schemes are progressing and reducing the number of complaints & the volume of correspondence.

#### Major marine transport connectivity schemes

Over the course of 2020/21 ambitious marine engineering schemes were progressed and designed to guarantee safe and sustainable transport for the region (the Helensburgh and Glasgow Harbour Improvement Scheme (HAGSIS) and the Glasgow Harbour Improvement Scheme (GHIS)).

New traffic management arrangements in Luss.

Traffic issues in Luss have been a cause of concern for residents for a number of years. Despite various attempts to find a proportionate, balanced and sustainable solution which meets the needs of residents,

### Temporary changes to waste collection during Covid

One response to the waste collection challenge during Covid was to place a temporary revised waste collection model in place. The Council has a firm commitment to reducing the amount of waste to landfill. The only sustainable and effective way to deliver this service during the first lockdown was to change our approach. This was our customers by providing an easy to follow, simple, efficient service and the safety and wellbeing of our staff.

By collecting all waste fortnightly from households, we mitigated the challenges presented by Covid and a reduced workforce due to shielding. Services resumed from the end of June 2020.

Overall feedback was positive and our waste teams were roundly praised and appreciated by communities across Argyll and Bute as they continued to deliver this vital service through such a challenging period.

### Covid safe funeral and cremation arrangements

In response to Covid changes had to be made to our burial and cremation services, with the focus on staff and mourner safety. A range of changes were made which included the process of interring a coffin and the social distancing guidance for Crematoriums

This provided an opportunity to develop specific Risk Assessments and Method Statements (RAMS). While none were previously needed it drove consistency across all 130 burial grounds. The changes to this service were underpinned by robust, meaningful and ongoing





considerate. We felt in very safe hands and that they were a very important part of making our wedding the happiest day in what could have been difficult circumstances. Very grateful to them for coming to our home to marry us and make our day so special”.

Performance Monitoring, Reporting and Scrutiny

During the pandemic governance and election business had to continue to be delivered whilst meeting the Electoral Commission's performance standards. New processes, risk assessments and procedures were devised and implemented whilst making best use of technology to meet Covid responsibilities while successfully delivering 2 local elections and a Scottish Parliamentary Election. Virtual delivery of seminars and training events ensured all newly elected Councillors completed the induction programme and ongoing professional development.

Continued support for Elected Members continues with arrangements for surgeries, office expenses and an increase in paperless processes through improved efficiency.

Supporting Communities And Their future

During 2020/21 The Ardchattan Centre acquired the former Ardchattan Primary School and School house in Bonawe. The group were successful in an application for funding from the Land Fund and wished to develop the property as a community centre. As part of the Community Asset Transfer process the estates team were able to direct the group through the Expression of Interest process which was a simpler and more easily understood method to achieve their aims.

## CHALLENGES FACED BY OUR SERVICES

### Financial Services Supporting Services to Support People and Businesses

'Business as usual' was significantly impacted by the need to support the Council's response to the pandemic and to transition from office based working to home based working. This created a unique set of challenges to maintain good teamwork and quality service delivery whilst taking on additional workloads to manage and report on the financial impact of Covid. Despite these additional pressures service met their key deadlines for preparing the financial statements, statutory financial returns and maintained a flow of quality financial reporting throughout the year to support services.

The impact of Covid on people in financial hardship resulted in an increase in the number of claims for the Scottish Welfare Fund by 20%. This has created pressure on the service with regards the volume of claims that require processing, but more significantly with the team striving to ensure that people in hardship are receiving longer term advice and support.

The financial impact of Covid on social care providers also meant the team were under increased pressure to process contracts and payments to providers for delivering care home services. On behalf of the Scottish Government the finance team within Social Work also implemented a social care providers' financial sustainability scheme which is an ongoing piece of work. Although this scheme has increased the workload on the team they have established new partnership working arrangements with care home providers to resolve any emerging financial issues.

Administering the range of Covid related Business Support Grants required significant resources and the redeployment of staff within Revenues and Benefits and Internal Audit. This in turn created increased pressure on Creditors and Treasury Management officers to manage the volume of payments and movement in funds.



A reactive approach was also required to manage the constantly moving picture of the 2020 & 2021 exam diet, qualifications & certification. A sub

## Legal and Regulatory Services Providing Governance to Support People and Businesses

Covid presented an additional requirement to administer the Taxi Support Fund in addition to business as usual. This support fund required new forms, procedures and an appeals process. All 250 applications were processed and paid within the required deadline.

The Elected Member Induction Programme was reviewed and redeveloped ahead of the 2022 local government elections. The review was based on feedback from the previous local government elections and provided the basis for the development of a virtual induction programme which supported the election of two new Councillors in March 2021.

## Customer Support Services The Infrastructure For An Agile Council

The overall challenge placed on Customer and Support Services was the pandemic and the demands it placed on us. It is included here to highlight the unprecedented additional demands that were placed on us and as a case study. However, meeting the additional demands due to the pandemic has resulted in other initiatives being put on hold or delayed.

Responding to the Covid pandemic meant providing a wide range of information about health, lockdown restrictions, business support, and impact on council services etc. This represented a significant, sudden and sustained increase in our volume of work. To address this, we had to put various other initiatives on hold or reschedule, for example developing [www.abplace2b.scot](http://www.abplace2b.scot) as a route for attracting people to live and work in Argyll and Bute.

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## Road and Infrastructure Services Communication and Improvements

Significant progress has been made in managing customer contact over the past few years by increasing automation, availability of information to reduce avoidable contact, improved business processes and service redesign. However, there continues to be pressure on back office teams and the volume of correspondence.

We will need to undertake another round of Business Process Redesigns to identify what improvements can be made within the processes. Our goal is to continue with the process of making information widely available and encouraging all customers to self-serve. This goal will need to be supported with



the changing requirements in a particular area and we stopped the requirement to pay for snacks.

5. **We Asked:** How can we provide better support to Parent Councils via the Parental Advisory Group (PAG).

**You Said:** A Parent Council Toolkit with information and training for parent councils would support this aim.

**We Did:** In collaboration with the PAG we developed a Parent Council Toolkit website with information to support the work of Parent Councils and developed a PowerPoint 'Role of Parent Council' Parent Councils to use. Provided newsletters with information for Parent Councils. The August newsletter had 88 views, which has increased to 147 views for the March newsletter and offered engagement sessions with both the Northern Alliance and Education Scotland.

6. **We Asked:** Parents what is important to you in the reopening of schools after Covid lockdown?

**You Said:** We received 4,065 responses. The top priority was to provide a safe environment for children and young people with a concern as to how a blended approach would work. Clear information on the arrangements would make you feel more comfortable with the best support we could offer families is regular communication with teachers.

**We did:** We shared the schools preparations for returning to school ensuring there was clear communication from the central team to schools and we produced clear guidance and a generic risk assessment template for all schools to follow but that could also be adapted.

7. **We Asked:** Staff what was important in the reopening of schools after Covid lockdown?

**You Said:** We received 517 responses. Again the top priority was to focus on the health and wellbeing of children and young people, a big concern was the impact the lockdown has had on pupils wellbeing. Clear information on what is in place to make everyone safe would make staff more comfortable returning.

**We Did:** We shared the schools preparations for returning to school ensuring clear communication from the central team was available to schools and parents. This included clear guidance and a generic risk assessment template for all schools to follow but that could also be adapted and provided schools with support and guidance on mental health and wellbeing for staff and pupils.

8. **We Asked:** Pupils what was important in the reopening of schools after Covid lockdown?

**You Said:** We received 1,296 responses. The top priority for returning was having time to plan and be with friends with the biggest concern and worry was that they might not be in school at the same time as their friends. To help them be less worried about returning they want schools to ensure that they were on track with their learning.

**We Did:** We shared the schools preparations for returning to school.

9. **We Asked:** For feedback from parents and carers on their learning and teaching experiences of



**We Did:** On the Council website we developed a specific Gaelic Education area which has a comprehensive list and links to available resources that support Gaelic Medium, including adult and community learning

- ¾ A pop up satisfaction/feedback survey on the website
- ¾ An automated quality survey after online forms have been completed
- ¾ A “what else would you like to see on the website” survey regarding website interactions
- ¾ An automated customer satisfaction survey on certain lines in to the Customer Service Centre
- ¾ A quality of service survey offered to every person who registered a birth, death or marriage with our Registration Service

The feedback on these surveys is used as part of continual improvements and are reported in the Quarterly Web Report

5. 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:

- ¾ A number of focus groups/face to face surveys throughout Argyll and Bute with key client groups and their representatives and specialist providers/services, such as Gypsy/Travelers, wheelchair users, and Armed Services/Veterans.
- ¾ Survey and telephone interviews with landlords, letting agents, estate agents, solicitors & tenants in the Private Rented Sector to inform HNDA & affordability analysis.
- ¾ An early engagement LHS online survey for partner local community groups and residents.
- ¾ A virtual LHS Stakeholder conference in November 2020 with around 50 participants to develop vision, outcomes & priorities for the next LHS.
- ¾ Staff Review Day for council housing services & colleagues in December 2020 defined outputs from the above exercises.
- ¾ In February 2021 Option Appraisal workshops were held with key partners/stakeholders to review and refine the LHS action plan targets. Targeted

8. Craignure Pier

We consulted on both the short and long term options. As a result of feedback from communities we are developing 3D projections of the possible options to allow for better understanding of the proposals.

9. Juralslay ferry

As a result of engagement and public feedback we made changes to the service to allow for a booked-in-advance later sailing at 20.30, this provides better transport connections for those travelling from Glasgow to Jura.

# COUNCIL SCORECARD

At the end of the financial year, there were 178 success measures in total of which 137 are on track and 41 are off track.

