
ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL

COUNCIL

27th June 2024

REPORT

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importance, how much value, he placed on those communities, and on doing the very best that he could, for them first and foremost.

Like so many fellow councillors and indeed council officers, Robin has been present throughout my entire council life so far. With almost 40 years of service, not just to local government but to the people he represented, it is very hard indeed to imagine this council without him.

3.3 Argyll and Bute Gaelic Gathering, 27th April: I was delighted to be able to join the Provost at the Gaelic Gathering in Oban on Saturday 27th April.

This year's Gathering was the fourth event, and t9rn-3(t)W*nBT(f)-1n ta4b.1C39BDC q0

A huge amount of work goes into organising an event like this and it's no surprise that this is another example of the positive partnership working for which Argyll and Bute is known. The event itself took a day – the work had been going on for months beforehand in order to ensure its success and its sustainability. Officers from the council have worked alongside partners at Bord na Gaidhlig, CHARTS, the Scottish Government and of course Argyll and Bute's Gaelic community to make the event happen.

With that in mind, the theme for this year of 'connections' was very fitting indeed and all of the workshop sessions and discussions, formal and informal, were focused on creating and building up those connections. They're a vital part of the drive to keep Gaelic alive and events like the Gathering help to nurture existing links and create new ones.

3.4 UK Islands Forum, 7th and 8th May: I joined local authority leaders and chief executives from island authorities across the UK in Anglesey for the latest meeting of the UK Islands Forum in early May.

The forum brings together councils with representatives from all national governments to focus on the particular challenges experienced by island communities and to ensure that island needs are reflected in policy-making.

The theme for this session was housing, obviously of keen interest for us. The increased attention to this at a national level must be maintained and, crucially, must turn into action. That too will be in sharp focus for us as we develop and drive forward our own priorities, building on the work already done, taking clear action and doing so at the pace demanded of this critical situation.

Argyll and Bute Council was due to host the next meeting of the Forum. With the calling of the UK General Election, the next steps are unconfirmed at this point. We will be seeking clarity following the election and, should the Forum continue, we will be happy to host as scheduled, this being a good practical opportunity to highlight some of the issues our island communities face as well as the contributions they make at a national level.

3.5 COSLA Meetings: I have attended two COSLA Leaders meetings during the period covered in this report. Agenda items are taken in private session, so I can share only the topics themselves, but will do my best to answer questions as far as possible or have a confidential discussion.

A number of key issues are recurring and/or the subject of continuing correspondence amongst Leaders, including the widely publicised public sector pay matter and teacher numbers/funding.

COSLA Leaders 26th April:

Teacher Numbers (continuing)
Education Assurance Arrangements
Childrens Services Social Care £12 per hour Uplift 2024/25
Scottish Government/Local Government Joint Digital Strategy
Publication of Local Government Workforce Report
Persistent Organic Pollutants
Pay Negotiations (continuing)
Local Government Finance
Verity House Agreement Dispute Resolution Procedure

COSLA Leaders 31st May:

Historical Child Abuse Redress Scheme
Verity House Agreement and Dispute Resolution Procedure

are inextricably linked to housing and we must and will move forward quickly on this.

I have had the first of a series of meetings with Jenni Minto MSP and will be working with Jenni and any other parliamentarians who can help us get results for Argyll and Bute. We have had offers of other ministerial meetings and will be pursuing others, particularly following the election.

I will be making contact in very early course indeed with the new UK Government to ascertain its intentions and next steps with the £20m Levelling Up Partnership funding confirmed for Argyll and Bute last year. This funding can make a real difference and we will want to ensure that it progresses as planned, as quickly as possible.

We were due to sign the Rural Growth Deal on 7th June but, with the calling of the General Election, this will be rescheduled. Officers continue to liaise with civil servants and, again, I look forward to engaging with both governments so that we can press ahead with this crucial Deal, meet this milestone and maintain progress and pace.

I have mentioned in this report a number of times the fact that we will be developing priorities for the rest of this council term. This work has started and is developing; I will be glad to share more detail as soon as practical and to answer any questions. I have also said on a number of occasions that action is critical and that will be a key element of those final priorities. I know that everyone in the chamber is ambitious for Argyll and Bute and we all have a part to play in delivering on those ambitions. We are in a time of real change, not just at council level but nationally too. This inevitably has an impact on some of the actions we would like to take and leaves some matters out of our control – for a while. That too will change and, as it does, we will maintain the momentum, we will work with whatever opportunities should arise, and we will act.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1** This report highlights the activities of the Leader of Argyll and Bute Council for the period 5th April to 12th June 2024.

Councillor Jim Lynch
Leader, Argyll and Bute Council

12th June 2024