

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUTE AND COWAL AREA COMMITTEE HELD ON A
HYBRID BASIS IN THE QUEEN'S HALL, DUNOON AND BY MICROSOFT TEAMS
ON TUESDAY, 5 MARCH 2024**

Present: Councillor Liz McCabe (Chair)

Councillor Audrey Forrest Councillor William Sinclair
Councillor Reeni Kennedy-Boyle Councillor Peter Wallace
Councillor Ross Moreland

Attending: Stuart McLean, Committee Manager
Jim Smith, Head of Road and Infrastructure Services
Colin Young, Strategic Transportation Delivery Officer
Colin Fulcher, Senior Economic Regeneration Officer
Kelly Ferns, Research and Development Officer
Stuart Green, Corporate Support Manager
Sonya Thomas, OD Project Officer
Suzanne Mason, Engagement and Communities Lead
Louise Lawson, Education Manager - Inclusion and Equality
Lisa Marle, Head Teacher, Innellan and Toward Primary School

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Yvonne McNeilly, Gordon Blair and Daniel Hampsey.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Reeni Kennedy-Boyle declared a non-financial interest in relation to item 9 of the agenda (Housing Services Activity Update - Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) – Annual Update), due to her occupation as General Manager of Fyne Futures which was a subsidiary of Fyne Homes. She advised that she would remain in the meeting during the consideration of this item.

3. MINUTES

(a) Bute and Cowal Area Committee - 5 December 2023

The Minute of the meeting of the Bute and Cowal Area Committee, held on 5 December 2023 was approved as a correct record.

(b) Bute and Cowal Area Community Planning Group - 6 February 2024

The Minute of the meeting of the Bute and Cowal Area Community Planning Group, held on 6 February 2024 was noted.

(c) Cowal Transport Forum - 12 December 2023

The Minute of the meeting of the Cowal Transport Forum, held on 12 December 2023 was noted.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Having noted that there were members of the public in attendance, the Chair invited them to submit any questions they may have.

Jean Moffat

As a member of the Friends of Arden Craig Gardens we have prepared a complete plan for the year and are very excited that shrubs and plants are being delivered this month. I am looking to ensure everything is going as planned, could this be confirmed?

Councillor Moreland advised that as far as he knew, the plants and shrubs are due to be delivered this month but that he would check with the appropriate Department and confirm.

Annemarie Ferguson

Could you advise us on the Council's policies and processes in relation to derelict houses, in particular 12-16 Castle Street to Buckingham Terrace?

Residents of Castle Street face ongoing risk to our health and safety. The risk is increasing as the recurrent storms continually add to the deterioration of the buildings, creating dangers to residents and passers-by of flying debris as well as the physical impact on our neighbouring homes.

What can the Council do given the latest information uncovered by our community councillors that the developer no longer believes it is economically viable to develop these buildings and that the only option now is to demolish 12-16 Castle Street?

The Research and Development Officer highlighted that the Council have a duty to ensure public safety and any elements that members of the public feel are unsafe should be reported, in the first instance, to Building Standards who will take action to ensure the building remains safe. The Research and Development Officer advised that it was her understanding that there had been engagement with the developer over the years and that there were some legal issues in terms of the title and that her understanding was that legal options were being pursued.

Ms Ferns added that due to Buckingham Terrace and Castle Street being within a conservation area that there are a number of constraints in terms of planning permission, adding that any proposal to demolish a property within that locality would be at the discretion of Historic Environment Scotland.

Councillor McCabe advised that she had contacted Building Standards in relation to the named properties but had not yet received a response. The Research and Development Officer advised that she would refer to colleagues in Building Standards and respond to the Chair.

Councillor Kennedy-Boyle asked if someone could meet with the residents and potentially support them developing a plan of action. The Research and Development Officer advised that she would enquire about a meeting being arranged with the residents with Housing, Planning and Building Standards.

Lawrence Lindsay

Many Rothesay residents have raised concerns regarding the lack of local newspapers within libraries since the Covid crisis. I have done research into all Live Argyll libraries and apart from Dunoon and Rothesay libraries, all others have access to their local newspaper in a digital format.

I asked the editor at Argyll Publishers if residents on Bute could have the same access and was told that as they are a very small publishing company they could not afford to make it available so I have been campaigning to make available the Isle of Bute News, at least, a hardcopy in our library.

I have been in contact with Councillor Kennedy-Boyle who sent an email to LiveArgyll who advised that they did not intend on reinstating the newspapers however if they found that there was enough demand in the community they would reconsider. I have been campaigning and have a petition with at least 200 signatures. Local newspapers have not been archived since March 2019. Therefore no important articles / stories are available for research or perusal by any member of the public.

I have been informed that older members of the community would previously look forward to reading the paper in the library where they would meet up with others. Having the local newspaper available in hardcopy is a must as many elderly people are not technologically aware and cannot access online services. Will the Area Committee support me in my attempts to reintroduce local, hardcopy, newspapers to Rothesay Library?

The Committee Manager advised that following receipt of Mr Lindsay's question he had passed it onto the LiveArgyll who provided the following response:

The decision to withdraw physical local newspapers in all our Libraries was made just as Covid happened. Yearly the library budget is shrinking and with little regular use, the budget for papers was completely cut. Even if we were to reinstate buying the physical local newspaper we can't show favouritism to one Library, so would have to buy for all our main libraries. This may seem a small cost but the cost is the equivalent of the book buying of non-fiction books for one of our part-time libraries. We are now looking at further reductions as the settlement from the Council to LiveArgyll has been reduced by 10%. We just don't have the budget.

Councillor Sinclair advised as a LiveArgyll Board Member he would speak to the Operations Team on Mr Lindsay's behalf, reiterating that LiveArgyll had a 10% cut to their operational budget and advised that adding additional expenses is extremely difficult due to budget pressures.

5. AREA PERFORMANCE REPORT - FQ3 2023/24

Consideration was given to the Area Performance Report for financial quarter 3 of 2023/24 (October to December 2023) which illustrated the agreed performance measures for this period.

Decision

The Bute and Cowal Area Committee:

1. noted and considered the performance and supporting commentary as presented;
2. noted that upon receipt of the Quarterly Performance Report the Area Committee should contact either the Responsible Named Officer or the Organisational Development Project Officer with any queries; and
3. noted that work was ongoing and to respond to the Organisational Development Project Officer with requests or comments regarding the layout and format of the Performance Report and Scorecard.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Customer Support Services, dated 7 February 2024, submitted)

6. PRIMARY AREA ATTAINMENT REPORT: BUTE AND COWAL

The Committee gave consideration to a report and a presentation which provided a range of key information about primary school provision in the Bute and Cowal area during the school session June 2023 to January 2024 and reported the national collection of attainment and achievement data from June 2023.

Decision

The Bute and Cowal Area Committee considered and noted the information provided within the report and presentation.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Education dated March 2024, submitted)

7. ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES UPDATE

The Committee gave consideration to a report which provided links to the recent activities of Roads and Infrastructure Services.

Decision

The Bute and Cowal Area Committee considered and noted the contents of the report.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Roads and Infrastructure Services, dated January 2024, submitted)

8. ROADS CAPITAL RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME 2024/25

The Committee gave consideration to a report which included a draft programme for roads reconstruction schemes for 2024/25 in the Bute and Cowal area.

Decision

The Bute and Cowal Area Committee:

1. provided comments on the draft programme contained at appendix 1 of the report, which were noted by the Head of Roads and Infrastructure Services; and

2. noted that the programme would go forward to the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee on 21 March 2024 for endorsement.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Roads and Infrastructure Services, dated February 2024, submitted)

9. HOUSING SERVICES ACTIVITY UPDATE - STRATEGIC HOUSING INVESTMENT PLAN (SHIP) - ANNUAL UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report which provided an update on Housing Services activity and the delivery of the Local Housing Strategy within the Bute and Cowal area.

Decision

The Bute and Cowal Area Committee considered and noted the contents of the report.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth, dated January 2024, submitted)

10. 2023/24 ACTIVE TRAVEL PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee gave consideration to a report which provided an update on the progress made in 2023/24 in relation to active travel projects in the Bute and Cowal area, and sought continued support for the projects from Members.

Decision

The Bute and Cowal Area Committee agreed to:

1. welcome the progress made to date across a significant number of active travel projects by the small Active Travel Team;
2. support the continuation of the projects and the submission of future funding applications to external challenge funds (while these still exist) to continue to develop design and construction stages in order to deliver these projects;
3. support the allocation of the active travel funding element in the Council's 2024/25 block grant to the development and delivery of appropriate active travel projects, including those already underway in Bute and Cowal; and
4. instruct Officers to continue to identify and develop new active travel projects to benefit local residents, businesses and communities.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth, dated 24 January 2024, submitted)

11. ROTHESAY TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE SCHEME - MARCH 2024 FINAL UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report updating members on the progress of the Rothesay Townscape Heritage scheme as the programme nears completion.

Decision

The Bute and Cowal Area Committee considered and noted the contents of the report.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth, dated February 2024, submitted)

12. SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES FUND - MONITORING OF PROJECTS FUNDED

The Committee gave consideration to a report which highlighted the positive outcomes of the Council's Supporting Communities Fund in 2022/23 for communities in the Bute and Cowal area.

Decision

The Bute and Cowal Area Committee:

1. noted and consider the positive contribution of the Supporting Communities Fund detailed in section 4 of the report and the attached table; and
2. noted that a total of £676.69 in unspent funds has been returned and agreed that this would be included in the distribution of the Supporting Communities Fund for 2024/25.

(Reference: Report by Chief Executive, dated 12 February 2024, submitted)

13. AREA PLANS UPDATE

Consideration was given to a presentation which provided information in relation to the progress of the Council's Area Plans project.

Decision

The Bute and Cowal Area Committee considered and noted the information provided.

(Reference: Presentation by Chief Executive's Unit, dated 5 March 2024, submitted)

14. PORT RIDDELL SLIP – UPDATE AND FUTURE OPTIONS

Consideration was given to a report providing members with an update on Port Riddell Slip, Dunoon following the decision to remove the project from the Rural Growth Deal (RGD) Tourism and Place Programme.

Decision

The Bute and Cowal Area Committee:

1. noted that members of the local community had indicated that there remains interest in the redevelopment of Port Riddell Slip to facilitate enhanced access to the local marine environment for leisure activities;
2. noted that Port Riddell Slip was no longer part of the RGD programme and no funding had currently been identified to progress any enhancements to this facility and that this

project could be considered for future grant funding bids or a community asset transfer;
and

3. noted that the facility was currently in a poor state of repair and vehicular access from the A815 had been restricted however, members of the public can still access the facility on foot and that consideration should be given to installing signage advising the public that use of the facility is at their own risk.

(Reference: Report by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth dated January 2024, submitted)

15. DRAFT BUTE AND COWAL AREA COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

The Bute and Cowal Area Committee workplan was before members for information.

Decision

The Bute and Cowal Committee noted the contents of the workplan.

(Reference: Bute and Cowal Area Committee workplan, dated 5 March 2024)