

**ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL EXECUTIVE MEETING: 16 April 2009**

**1. Council tax collections to end of March for 2008/9**

Council Tax collections to end of March for 2008/9 are provisionally 95.32% - now exactly the same as last year, just as at the end of February. However we are currently investigating 3 correction transactions posted on 23 March from the new cash receipting system which are reflected in the overall statistics but do not appear in the related individual accounts. These could increase collections by £207,018 – equivalent to 0.4%. Overpaid accounts are still lower than the previous year's so we actually have a slight increase in performance irrespective of the outcome of the investigation into these 3 transactions. Current year Sheriff Officer payments are still up on last year's now equating to c 0.2% on collections.

Collections for the 2007/08 year are now 96.94%, down 0.06% on last year's at this time.

Collections of Non-Domestic Rates to the end of March for 2008/9 are 101.44% - reduced from last month reflecting the repayment in respect of Faslane. We still have overpayments of just under £1m in respect of NBC Clyde Properties as previously reported and also some late running roll changes. Adjusting for these overpayments would give a corrected collection rate of 97.52%, virtually identical to last year's. Collections for 2007/8 are 101.60%, again overstated by overpayments majority of which also relates to NBC Clyde Properties. Adjusted for overpayments, the true collection rate is 98.77%, well on track to a cumulative collection rate of 99%.

These figures are not final year end figures as they do not allow for any cash in transit and accounting accruals. The final figures are likely to be slightly higher.

The 3 largest firms of Sheriff Officers have all responded to the Sheriff Officer tender issued and these responses are being evaluated

**2. 4<sup>th</sup> march 2009, Argyll and Bute Community Planning Full Partnership Meeting**

On 4<sup>th</sup> March, I chaired the above meeting.

Raymond Park gave up-dates to the meeting on; Previous Management Committee Meetings, the involvement of all partners in the writing of the SOA, my letter to all partners in relation to core funding and finance issues and our correspondence with Cabinet secretary regarding CPP funding. He also thanked all those who had contributed both financially and in-kind, he confirmed that funding had been committed by Strathclyde Police and Strathclyde Fire and Rescue.

The meeting was up-dated on the progress of the Community Planning Action Plan, including the constitution, Action Plan and framework for reporting. The Management Committee would be updated further on the Action Plan at the meeting on 18 March.

Eileen Wilson updated the meeting on the Constitution. Carron Tobin has asked the National Park legal department to review the agreement. It was confirmed that Mike Breslin from Argyll College would be added to the list of partners.

Raymond Park updated the meeting on ABADAT (Argyll and Bute Alcohol and Drugs Advisory Team), also the development of the ABADP (for which a co-ordinator has been appointed taking up the post in April). This work is closely linked with work on community safety and the Community Safety Partnership. It was also confirmed that Joyce Cameron would obtain an electronic copy of Strathclyde Fire & Rescue Assessment for Argyll and Bute and send it out to all partners.

### **SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT**

Brian Barker thanked contributors to the SOA. It was noted that the Council was due to agree to support submission of the SOA at its meeting on 5 March. Partners would be expected to sign up in full to the SOA (as per Scottish Government guidance).

Peter Russell broadly welcomed the SOA from a Government perspective and made some comments on aspects of the content that would be picked up in the dialogue between the CPP and Government in the period between submission and final sign off of the SOA (before the end of May).

The meeting approved the draft Single Outcome Agreement for submission to the Government.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

Nigel Stewart updated the group on progress with the Community Engagement Strategy. The need to ensure inclusivity and effective co-ordination of the Community Engagement action plan was discussed. It was agreed that the Community Engagement Strategy would be put forward to Management Committee on 18 March 2009.

### **ARGYLL AND BUTE MENTAL HEALTH RE-DESIGN UPDATE**

Derek Leslie gave a presentation on Mental Health Services redesign and the challenges faced by the NHS. There was some discussion around the slides and partners were encouraged to attend the remaining consultation meetings in March. Engagement with Young People was raised as an issue and Roanna Taylor suggested that Young Scot could be used to help engage younger people in the consultation.

The next meeting will take place on 17 April

### **3. Video Conference on 10<sup>th</sup> March with Dennis Malone form Highlands and Islands European Partnership**

At the most recent meeting of the Highlands and Islands European Programme Monitoring Committee, the European Commission made it very clear that there is a significant underspend in ERDF monies. In direct response to this, I convened a meeting with the Scottish Government (Jim Millard), Highlands and Islands Enterprise (Douglas Cowan), Highlands and Islands European Partnership (Dennis Malone) and senior officers of the Council.

This was a very positive meeting at which I secured a commitment from the Scottish Government and European Partnership to work with the Council to deliver a multi million pound grant from Europe to the Council's proposed investment in the South Kintyre renewable energy plant development. I also secured a commitment to maximise the European funding input into the Council's CHORD projects through ERDF and INTERREG.

Our Council, having made bold capital investment decisions to improve our town centres and waterfronts is now in an excellent position to use this as match funding to lever in external monies. This will further benefit our communities at this difficult time of economic uncertainty. AS a Council we can be proud that we are leading the way in rural Scotland with investment-led regeneration.

### **4. Meeting Of The CHORD Programme Management Board Held In The Members Room, Kilmory, Lochgilphead On Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> March.**

I chaired the above meeting at which five papers covered the main agenda items; Chord Programme Governance Arrangements, The Project Initiation Document Template, Draft Programme Plan and Indicative EU Funding for the CHORD Programme. The meeting concluded with a report by the Head of Economic Development and Strategic Transportation

#### **Chord Programme Governance Arrangements**

This paper described how the CHORD programme of projects will give effect to the decisions taken by the Council on 27 November 2008 and by the Executive on 18 December 2008. They would provide the basis in principle for committing £30m of capital expenditure to significant public realm works in communities throughout Argyll and Bute. The governance arrangements were described as key to taking these projects forward on a planned, transparent and accountable a basis and the process would enable Members, officers, stakeholders, communities and key partner organisations to take forward the programme in a way which is compatible with these principles.

Capital and revenue resources are available and the process outlined here will develop financial information which will be required by the Council to remain informed and agree to actions to enable the decisions of 27 November to be given effect.

There will be legal, regulatory, risk management, design, procurement and

sustainability considerations associated with taking forward such an extensive and complex programme. The full paper on Governance Arrangements can be found in the Leaders Report Pack.

### **The Project Initiation Document Template**

The template (which was included in the papers for this meeting, and can be found within the Leader's Report Pack) for the Project Initiation Document adheres to the Council's preferred, tried and tested Project Management methodology of Prince 2 which will undergo some adaptation to ensure that it recognises, at all stages, the political environment in which the project will develop.

### **Draft Programme Plan**

This paper described the CHORD Programme as a portfolio of projects selected, planned and managed in a coordinated way. The Programme Plan will track the projects within the programme as well as the key milestones and will identify when they will be delivered and at what cost. The Programme Plan will be populated as information regarding the projects becomes available through the PIDs. It will be revised as information on actual progress appears. The Plan is a major control document for the Programme Board to measure actual progress against expectations. More specifically, the plan will include (some as annexes): identification of management structures, roles and resources for programme management and key milestones for the governance and management of the Programme.

### **Indicative EU Funding For the CHORD Programme**

This report presented a summary of potential European funding options for the CHORD projects. The figures contained within the report were indicative only and therefore subject to due process in assessing eligible costs following detailed consideration of the Full Business Cases, once developed. The Board noted the contents of this report.

In addition to the above information, Fergus Murray, Development Policy Manager gave an up-date on the development and the funding situation relating to the Campbeltown Town Centre Regeneration Project. Discussion followed on how this existing project can be dovetailed to the CHORD project for Campbeltown.

By Head Of Economic Development And Strategic Transportation.

## **5. Convention of the Highlands and Islands held on Arran, 23 March**

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance & Sustainable Growth gave the welcome to participants of the Convention; This was followed by the Keynote address by David O'Neill, Leader of North Ayrshire Council.

### **Paper 1. The Benefits and Challenges Of Community Planning In A Period Of Economic Recession**

The first item on the agenda was about the benefits and challenges of community planning in a period of economic recession, the main paper for this discussion had

been prepared by Highland Council with input from Argyll and Bute and other participating Councils. The purpose of the report was to enable productive discussion at the Convention on the benefits and challenges of community planning in a period of economic recession. This paper can be found within the Leader's Report Pack.

### **Paper 2. The Role of the Strategic Transport Projects Review in Supporting the Highlands and Islands**

The second item on the agenda related to the role of the Strategic Transport Projects Review in supporting the Highlands and Islands. This subject was introduced by Stewart Stevenson, Minister for Transport, Infrastructure & Climate Change. The Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) sets out the future investment programme for transport in Scotland over the next 20 years. It provides the basis on which Ministers can make informed decisions about future transport spending beyond the current programme. The STPR identified national strategic land-based transport priorities that will contribute to Government's purpose of increased sustainable economic growth over medium to long term. It is the biggest and most ambitious Scottish transport plan ever published. Please see the Leader's Report Pack for further information.

### **Paper 3. A Vision for Renewables in the Highlands and Islands - Working Together to Develop Scotland's Renewables Action Plan**

In the early afternoon, the First Minister held a Question and Answer Session which was followed by discussion of the Convention's third paper "A Vision for Renewables in the Highlands and Islands – Working Together to Develop Scotland's Renewables Action Plan. This paper was introduced by The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth, John Swinney, and described the Scottish Government's ambitions for Scotland as a global leader in Renewable Energy. Achieving a greener Scotland is part of the Government's purpose of delivering increased sustainable economic growth. The delivery of a greener Scotland runs through almost all of the social and economic strategic objectives to which the Scottish Government aspires. Full details of this paper are available in the Leader's Report Pack

The next Convention of the Highlands and Islands will be hosted here in Argyll and Bute at a date and venue to be advised.

## **6. Vestas/Skycon Handover**

On Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March I was delighted to be able to attend the Official handover of Vestas to Skycon. The event took place at the transitional site, Skycon Towers, and was attended by a broad delegation of employees, stakeholders and Scottish and Local Government. Presentations and speeches were made by; the First Minister, Alex Salmond, Knud Bjarne Hansen (President Vestas Towers), Jesper Øhlenschlæger (CEO Skycon) and me.

After learning of the threat of closure of the Vesta's site in August last year, this event was an especially happy one, heralding huge optimism for the Campbeltown

and Kintyre area, giving the area an opportunity to not only weather the recession but indeed place the area at the leading edge of environmental technology which is the future hope for Scotland.

Full details of the event and my speech can be seen in the Leaders Report Pack.