

Bute and Cowal Area Committee took place on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023, link to meeting minutes and recording below. I asked questions of importance to constituents on Bute.

Housing – to what extent ACHA engage with owner/occupiers to enable them to take part in upgrading and energy/efficiency works. For High St/Russell St two properties were subject to buy back scheme which is a useful offer for home owners who may be unable to afford upgrades and selling the property is a welcome option. It was indicated that there could be improvements in joined up working between RSL’s and the Council to make accessing available support more navigable. I will follow up on this.

Culture, Heritage and Arts – I asked to what extent CHARTS engage with community led organisations on Bute, specifically Bute Museum and IBAC. Seymour Adams, Vice Chair, indicated he would follow up.

Area Performance Report – several questions on a range of service areas were put regarding this agenda item with commitment that services will come back to me. In particular, I pressed for an answer on Planning processes and decision making back log as Bute & Cowal is lagging behind the other areas with subsequent economic impacts.

Health and Social Care Partnership Performance Report for FQ1 2023/24 – I asked about upticks in the numbers presenting to A&E, which increases on Bute towards to the summer. Further analysis will be undertaken as there may be impact on local resources with visitor numbers however this level of detail needs examination.

Roads and Infrastructure Services Update – a new officer should be in post from 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2024 which will bring the Bute & Cowal team back up to speed. I welcomed the increased presence of Traffic Warden dealing with problem parking with a particular view to improving accessibility, and specifically the issue of lining at dropped kerbs. I raised again the need for community engagement around changes to speed zones. I will continue to work with officers however it is within the gift of the Tory/LibDem Administration to instruct community consultation or engagement meetings on this topic.

Pre-application for Proposed Demolition and Redevelopment of Former Rothesay Academy – I am delighted that further progress is being made on this matter.

Outcome of THI Programme – I was happy to agree this item be carried forward and specifically asking for reports on Town Planning and an Evaluation Exercise both of which were carried out during the programme are presented to the March 2024 meeting.

[Agenda for Bute and Cowal Area Committee on Tuesday, 5 December 2023, 10:00 am - Argyll and Bute Council \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=242&MIId=15455&Ver=4)

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Policy and Resources Committee took place on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023, link to meeting minutes and recording below.

There was much discussion on the recent impacts from successive storms on the roads network. I asked what policy developments were being discussed by the Administration with regards to bringing a community well-building agenda into investment strategies. The answers did not fill me

with confidence however I have asked officers to consider what Shared Ownership models could realise. I am thinking specifically of the three wind farms that are being proposed for the Oban and Lorne area. These are significant projects which will deliver huge profits over a very long time. I think these represent a massive opportunity for Argyll & Bute Council to generate long term return on investment. Shared ownership is something these companies must consider over and above the normal community benefit obligation.

With regards to Sustainable Procurement Policy, I asked how social, environmental and economic impacts are measured through the community benefit clauses that are put in place when contracts are awarded. I also asked about a Scorecard methodology for measuring supplier performance to ensure we are getting best value for money. This is not in place at present but will be looked at in the future.

Natural Restorations – I asked about developing a project around Restoration of Tom’s Cuts in Rothesay to mitigate against future flooding. There will be follow up discussions which I hope will include our local experts Bute Conservation Trust.

A new concept of Single Authority governance has been put forward for exploration. This is about further local democratic oversight with bespoke solutions for Argyll & Bute. I asked what links there maybe to Democracy Matters and applying Scottish Design Principles to this in idea to ensure local communities are involved in the evolution of this idea. There was an interesting discussion around what community is and who should be involved decision making. I advocated for the many democratic organisations across the region that are membership based with elected leadership and expressed a desire that these are included in any service re-designs in the future.

[Agenda for Policy and Resources Committee on Thursday, 7 December 2023, 10:30 am - Argyll and Bute Council \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=544&MIId=15462&Ver=4)

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I attended Audit & Scrutiny Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2023, link to minutes and media is below. This committee is more technical and is focused on compliance. I examined data exchanged with HMRC, Cyber Security issues arising from criminal activity that can impact people and functions, and recognising improvements in ensuring data is up to date and able to be matched.

I was able to raise the matter regarding RSL’s and local authority working together better to access funding for private owners during this meeting. I challenged the lack of progress being made in matching datasets between HSCP requests for 2<sup>nd</sup> bins for welfare issues and lack of resource to undertake assessments for 2<sup>nd</sup> bins request by the waste management service. This should be followed up before March 2024.

I picked up on the cost of vehicle hire to the Council, where the audit process picked issues to be addressed by the Senior Accountant. I look forward to seeing the next report which will hopefully contain some innovative thinking around Shared Resources.

The committee explored the particular issues around Waste Management Strategy going forward particularly the environmental and economic impacts.

[Agenda for Audit and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 19 December 2023, 1:30 pm - Argyll and Bute Council \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=595&MIId=15482&Ver=4)

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Constituency work has been about enabling people to access funding, services and engaging with other public services such as Scottish Water.