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**ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN UPDATE**

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**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the Council is currently involved in responding to the Covid 19 pandemic across a number of different policy areas and work streams. This report outlines the steps the council is taking forward to help deliver economic recovery for the Argyll and Bute region. This includes the work we are doing across a number of council services, with our key partners including working with the private sector, Scottish and UK Governments. Our economic recovery forms a key part of our wider recovery framework but it is anticipated that this will take a considerable period of time and also be heavily influenced by national economic recovery plans as they emerge. **Appendix A** of this report contains the draft Argyll and Bute Economic Recovery Plan for members to consider and endorse as appropriate. **Appendix B** lists a number of actions already completed or underway by council services as part of the economic recovery across Argyll and Bute.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Business Continuity Committee:

- 2.1 Consider the contents of this report and endorse the draft Argyll and Bute Economic Recovery Plan included in **Appendix A** subject to any comments they wish to make.

**3.0 DETAILS**

- 3.1 Members have already been advised on the Council's response to mitigate the negative impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic through other reports considered by the BCC. This report has been written with regard to the economic recovery of Argyll and Bute and outlines the work that has already commenced between the Council and our partners. A key aspect of economic recovery will be continued collaboration with numerous stakeholders across all of the sectors including both the Scottish and UK Governments. Full account will also be taken of any emerging national economic recovery plan but it will be vital to ensure that the particular needs, issues and future opportunities faced by our region are taken fully into account. This may include a need to change our economic priorities depending on what direction the Government of the UK and Scotland take. Influencing the direction of this from an Argyll and Bute perspective will be best done through the production of our own economic recovery plan, informed by collaboration and local partnership working, together with drawing

in local and external expertise wherever we can.

- 3.2 Given the economic shock resulting from the global necessity to respond to the public health implications of the pandemic it will take time to fully understand the short, medium and longer term economic impacts. Work has already commenced to gather data for Argyll and Bute working with our partners to inform future engagement with potential funders including both Governments. The Development and Economic Growth Service of the Council working across council services and with key partners are also taking forward a number of activities as part of the recovery process. The following paragraphs and **Appendix B** provides details on actions taken to date.
- 3.3 The **Argyll Economic Resilience Forum** has been formed following discussions with HIE and council economic development officers. The Forum has held three meetings so far and intends to meet every two weeks for the foreseeable future. Currently chaired by Morag Goodfellow of HIE its first action was to approve its terms of reference (see below) at its first meeting held in April. In addition to the council and HIE, Scottish Enterprise, SDS and Visit Scotland have attended together with private sector representatives from BIDs group, Federation of SMEs, key business sectors such as tourism, aquaculture, agriculture, construction, fisheries and chambers of commerce. It is likely that the membership of the Forum will expand in the months ahead as the economic impacts and recovery requirements of the pandemic become clearer. Topics discussed so far include business liquidity issues, specific grant support for businesses including gaps in support, communication with visitors on when to return to Argyll and Bute, gathering data on the impacts of Covid 19 on our economy and social distancing requirements for businesses as they look to re-start business activities.

**Argyll Economic Resilience Forum Terms of reference:**

1. Provide industry with regular updates on the public sector's response to COVID19
  2. Industry representatives to provide regular updates on business issues and sector responses relating to the impact of COVID19
  3. Act as a sounding board to assist the public sector's response to the COVID19 outbreak, including any future recovery plan
  4. To assist the sharing of relevant local, regional and national information
- 3.4 It is intended that the Forum will play a key role in advising the future direction of the economic recovery of Argyll and Bute in the weeks and months ahead. Economic recovery forms a critical part of the wider recovery of Argyll and Bute in terms of re-instating business as usual, re-opening council offices and services, public health, caring for people and key infrastructure. The wider Argyll and Bute recovery process will be subject to a separate report for Members to consider at the next meeting of the BCC.

- 3.5 In addition to the work of the Forum, Council staff are continuing to deliver services that support business continuity at this time and also prepare for when the lockdown is eased. In particular, tenders are being progressed to enable works to start when this is permitted to do so and other works such as design work have also been commissioned to keep projects moving forward at this time. Existing funding programmes such as Leader are continuing to be monitored and bids are being made to newly emerging funding streams to attract additional finance to Argyll and Bute. In addition a number of wider economic initiatives are also progressing including place making and area regeneration activities, the Lorn Arc, employability, business gateway business advice on improving digital connectivity for example, the Maritime Change Programme, the support of BIDs, progressing housing sites prior to a start on site, active travel projects and responding to Government consultations that are still continuing at this time.
- 3.6 The council continues to receive and take decisions with regard to planning applications and building warrants. The Government has assisted this process with relaxations on certain procedures enabled by changes in Government legislation. The PPSL has also been reconvened to be held remotely for the consideration of licences, regulatory services reports and planning applications. The LDP2 is continuing to be progressed according to the agreed schedule. Work has also been completed on training environmental health officers to undertake business social distancing monitoring and this will be a key role as the economy continues to re-start with an emphasis of public health and safety.
- 3.7 Staff are also continuing to meet potential investors in our economy and assist bringing forward new employment sites. Another key area of work is reviewing the current approved Argyll and Bute Economic Strategy and looking to prioritise our actions to best support our economic recovery.
- 3.8 A key aspect of recovery will be the **Argyll Rural Growth Deal (RGD)**. Work on the RGD is continuing; draft outline strategic proposals were submitted to both Governments for their initial feedback, some of which has just been received back which the team are responding to. It is intended that this will inform a Heads of Terms Agreement with the Council, possible additional partners such as HIE and SE, together with both Governments in the summer, subject to agreement being reached and taking into account ongoing efforts with Covid 19. It is then intended to develop strategic outline business cases to enable the final agreement to be signed by all parties over the next 12 months. Following this individual projects will start to be developed and implemented on the ground.
- 3.9 Council officers continue to have regular dialogue with both Governments regarding the RGD and also with our key partners such as HIE and Scottish Enterprise. Growth Deals across the UK are considered by both Governments to be a key part of the recovery from this pandemic and talks are underway on how positive economic impacts can be delivered in the most effective and timeous way.

- 3.10 To help guide economic recovery in Argyll and Bute a draft economic recovery plan has been produced to reflect the main steps we need to take in order to delivery economic recovery. The draft plan is shown as a diagram that forms **Appendix A** of this report and key actions already taken or are ongoing in **Appendix B**. Comments are welcome from Members on the content of the diagram at this early stage of the Argyll and Bute economic recovery process. It is anticipated that further changes will prove necessary as we start to better understand the impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic and how best to respond to them.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Initial indications show the local economy has received a significant setback due to Covid 19 restrictions in common with much of the global economy. This report concerns the economic recovery of Argyll and Bute. The process of recovery has already commenced with a number of areas making progress in anticipation of the national economic recovery plan that may also have an impact on future economic priorities and direction of travel for our region. Members are asked to consider the contents of the report and endorse the draft Argyll and Bute Economic Recovery Plan in **Appendix A** subject to any comments they wish to make at this time.

## 5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 **Policy** – None arising from this report.
- 5.2 **Financial** - None arising from this report
- 5.3 **Legal** - No legal issues
- 5.4 **HR** - This will need to be resourced from existing staff.
- 5.5 **Fairer Scotland Duty:**
- 5.5.1 **Equalities - protected characteristics:** There are no equal opportunities implications.
  - 5.5.2 **Socio-economic Duty:** It is intended that by implementing our economic recovery at this early stage it will best support the social and economic needs of our communities.
  - 5.5.3 **Islands:** None arising from this report; the economic needs of our islands will require to be fully considered as we move forward.
- 5.6 **Risk** - There is a risk that if we do not look to our region's economic recovery now opportunities and assistance will be missed.
- 5.7 **Customer Service** - There are no customer service implications.

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