

The upcoming budget has dominated the Council agenda in the last month, and I have attended a seminar and several meetings in relation to this. In October last year the First Minister announced a Council Tax freeze without any consultation with local authorities, promising full funding.

The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) have said “Disappointingly the Scottish Budget has not provided our local authorities with a fully funded council tax freeze as expected. The Scottish Government has set aside £144m stating this will ‘fully fund’ a council tax freeze – this would only provide the income equivalent to a 5% rise.

However, Local Government’s core revenue budget was cut by £63m from the outset, essentially leaving just £81m compensation for a council tax freeze. As a result, Local Government is faced with the reality that the funding offered for a council tax freeze only equates to a 2.8% rise.”

This leaves the Council with a choice between going against the freeze or putting essential services at risk.

I attended a site visit with Fyne Homes to the former Rothesay Academy to see how the site could be repurposed for housing. The site is included in the Strategic Housing Investment Plan, and work is in the very early stages but could bring much needed additional housing to the island.

I attended the AGM of the Bute Ferry Committee and heard about issues facing ferry users across the network. I am delighted that one of the lifts at Rothesay Pier has been fixed and is operational again. The public consultation on the next generation of contract to operate the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Service is underway and is open until 8th March. Everyone can put forward their views by completing the document online at: <https://www.transport.gov.scot/consultation/public-consultation-for-the-next-clyde-hebrides-ferry-services-contract/>

I attended the Scottish Night at Rothesay Joint Campus, which was a fantastic evening of food, entertainment and displays which demonstrated the wealth of talent at the campus and I congratulate everyone who was involved in putting on the event. I also attended the Parent Council meeting and heard about the academic and community achievements and success by pupils across the campus.

I had the pleasure of attending a Citizenship Ceremony in the new Council Offices in Victoria Street and witnessed the individual making their affirmation of loyalty to our country on being granted British Citizenship. I also was pleased to be able to attend a reception at Downing Street with colleagues from across the country.

I also attended a number of committee meetings and civic government hearings of the Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee (PPSL) including a site visit to Connel.

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