



North Ayrshire Council

Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

Meeting of the Council

Wednesday 27 March 2019

Responses to Questions

Question

(1) a question by Councillor Marshall to the Leader of the Opposition:-

"The SNP at the last election stood on a manifesto commitment of a maximum increase of 3% on the Council Tax. However at Council in February the SNP Group voted for an increase of 4.79% for 2019/20, and opposed the Conservative Amendment of a 3% increase. Why did the Opposition not support a council tax rise which would have delivered their own manifesto commitment, or was this a manifesto commitment which they never intended to keep?"

Response

Councillor Burns will respond.

Question

(2) a question by Councillor Hill to the Cabinet Member for the Economy in the following terms:-

"Does the Portfolio Holder welcome The Scottish Government/COSLA announcement of £1.4m of funding for North Ayrshire to establish a new Town Centre Fund aimed at ensuring our High Streets are more diverse, sustainable and successful?"

Response

"We always welcome additional Government funding for North Ayrshire. Our town centres are very important to all our communities and we recognise the challenges that they are facing as shopping patterns change and increasing numbers of commercial buildings become redundant in our towns. The Scottish Government funding is a one-off amount of £1.4m for 2019/20 only. Officers will consider potential options for the Fund with a report for consideration coming to May Cabinet."

Question

- (3) a question by Councillor Brahim to the Cabinet Member for Place in the following terms:-

"In light of North Ayrshire Council's pledge to support Keep Scotland Beautiful's Roadside Litter campaign following a motion I lodged last summer, can the Portfolioholder for Place provide an update detailing what steps have been taken to conduct an ongoing publicity campaign, what options have been explored to optimise the presence and location of roadside bins and monitoring roadside litter levels and what other efforts have been made in line with this specific campaign?"

Response

"Thank you for your question regarding roadside litter.

The Council has taken a number of actions to reduce this and continues to work closely with Keep Scotland Beautiful on roadside and general litter issues.

Streetscene has populated known areas of concern/litter hot spots with the promotional advertising provided by Keep Scotland Beautiful. The material is designed to encourage people to 'Give their litter a lift home'. In addition the messaging also informs drivers to take their litter home as there are 'no bins here'. Streetscene have removed litter bins from specific laybys, as suggested by KSB, which were subsequently populated with these signs. This has been monitored and has resulted in reduced volumes of litter in these roadside locations.

In addition to this the Streetscene Environmental Enforcement team has developed its own enforcement signs to help support the KSB initiative.

These signs are bright yellow and warn potential offenders that surveillance is in place and that litter attracts an £80 Fixed Penalty Notice.. This is being implemented in two specific locations in Irvine where roadside litter was a serious problem. The signs are in place on the A71 and at the exit from the Riverside Retail Park. Early indications are that this is having a positive impact with reduced litter and an improved visual impact on the area.

This is now being considered for expansion into surrounding locations and other known litter hot spots.

As well as signs, CCTV cameras have been implemented on the A71, at Irvine Beach park and at Byrehill Road, Kilwinning to help address all levels of environmental crime including road side litter and fly tipping. This combined with the recent "DASH CAM" campaign which encourages members of the public to report offences captured on dash cams are also having an impact on people's behaviour.

I can furthermore confirm that laybys and roadsides are continually monitored for the impacts of litter and clearances are scheduled for badly affected areas in line with planned roadside closures to minimise disruption and reduce costs."

Question

- (4) a question by Councillor Brahim to the Cabinet Member for Communities in the following terms:-

“I would like to ask the Portfolio Holder for Communities if she agrees that we must ensure all EU citizens in North Ayrshire have access to Android devices through Council buildings and home visits, to ensure they have the opportunity to apply for the Settled Status Scheme and if so, what measures the Council will put in place to accommodate this.”

Response

“Staff in North Ayrshire Library Service are working with We Are Digital to ensure that there is access to the necessary resources relating to EU National and the Settled Status Scheme. We Are Digital will be the conduit for appointments with anyone in the North Ayrshire area requiring assistance being directed to us. Three libraries have been identified to participate in the scheme and staff there are currently having additional security checks carried out in order to operate the system and help in the delivery of this work.”

Question

- (5) a question by Councillor Murdoch to the Cabinet Member for the Economy in the following terms:-

“Before planning permission was granted for the Decommissioning Site at the Marine Construction Yard at Hunterston in 2018, were all meetings held between North Ayrshire Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency and Marine Scotland minuted and if not why not?”

Response

“There is no record of any minutes of such meetings as they would have been informal in nature. These meetings would have been held prior to the formal consultation being inserted on the Council's Planning Portal.”

Question

- (6) a question by Councillor Murdoch to the Cabinet Member for the Economy in the following terms:-

“If the proposal is successful, how many jobs will be created at the Decommissioning Site at the Marine Construction Yard at Hunterston?”

Response

“The report to the Council’s Planning Committee on 25 April 2018 (Agenda Item 3.2), advises that the applicant’s ‘Socio Economic Report’ submitted in support of the application summarises that the long term investments at the site would secure initial funding of approximately £60-80 million from partners and funding resulting in a spend of £76m at the site to accommodate the decommissioning. It would create 500-550 gross Person Year Equivalent jobs in construction and related sectors and the ongoing operations at the site would result in £50m annual operating contract values, generating some 220-260 permanent full time equivalent jobs.”

Question

- (7) a question by Councillor Murdoch to the Chair of Planning in the following terms:-

“In documentation obtained through Freedom of Information relating to the Hunterston Marine Construction Yard, there is a letter from the Enviro Centre dated 10th January 2018 sent to North Ayrshire’s Planning Department. Is the Chair of Planning aware of the existence of this letter and if so when did he become aware of it?”

Response

“The documents were published on the Council’s ePlanning Portal, which are available to Members in advance of the determination. The letter relates to clarification on environmental studies. The report to the Council’s Planning Committee on 25 April 2018 (Agenda Item 3.2), refers to the applicant’s ‘Environmental Statement’.

I was made aware of the terms of the letter after it was received and that it informed the Planning Officer’s report.”

Question

(8) a question by Councillor Murdoch to the Chair of Planning in the following terms:-

“Was there a reply sent to the letter dated the 10th January 2018 from the Enviro Centre to North Ayrshire’s Planning Department in respect of the Hunterston Marine Construction Yard and why is there no reference in the formal planning report provided to the Planning Committee?”

Response

“The letter relates to clarification on environmental studies. The contents of the letter would have formed part of the applicant’s supporting information to the application, all of which would have been considered in the Officer’s assessment, and the consultees response to the application and the supporting information see the report to the Council’s Planning Committee on 25 April 2018.”

Question

(9) a question by Councillor Murdoch to the Cabinet Member for the Economy in the following terms:-

“EDF have recently held two Public Information Sessions at Hunterston B Power Station. Are there any plans to invite EDF to a meeting with North Ayrshire Council to discuss the graphite inspections, modelling and analysis work that has been taking place on the reactors at Hunterston since they have been offline?”

Response

“Councillors and officers last met with the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) and EDF, on the 25 June 2018 to receive an update from both parties in relation to the key way root cracks found in reactors 3 and 4 at Hunterston B. Furthermore, the ONR, EDF and other stakeholders including Elected Members and Council Officers meet on a quarterly basis at the Hunterston Site Stakeholders Group to receive updates on current activity and progress at both Hunterston A and B.

Whilst this regular engagement with all parties at the Site Stakeholder Group and the increasing amount of information now in the public domain from both EDF and the ONR relating to the issues of graphite ageing has enabled greater awareness of the current situation the Chief Executive plans to invite ONR and EDF to meet with him as part of a regular programme.”

Question

(10) a question by Councillor McClung to the Cabinet Member for Communities in the following terms:-

“The Year 2020 marks the 700th Anniversary of the signing, on 6th April, 1320, of The Declaration of Arbroath.

The importance of this document is acknowledged throughout the world since it is not, as many believe, simply a declaration of Scotland’s right to self-determination, but is also hugely important in that it recognises that the people of Scotland have their own identity. It also asserts that the **people** of this country are sovereign, and as such have the right to be ruled only by those to whom we give that gift.

The National Records of Scotland describe this document as “foremost among Scotland’s state papers”.

A US Resolution of 10th November, 1997 states formally that the American Declaration of Independence was directly modelled on the Declaration of Arbroath.

Also, in 2016 the document’s huge significance was acknowledged, and its international importance recognised, when the Declaration of Arbroath was placed on UNESCO’s “Memory of the World” Register.

The text of the Declaration of Arbroath is generally ascribed to Bernard, Abbot of Kilwinning, who went on to be Chancellor of Scotland and Abbot of Arbroath. One of the Declaration’s signatories was Fergus of Ardrossan. Add to that the fact that a signatory of the aforementioned American Declaration of Independence, Reverend John Witherspoon, was a Church Minister in Beith from 1745-1758, and it would seem obvious that this upcoming centenary is an unparalleled opportunity for North Ayrshire to capitalise on the area’s historic significance, not the least as a way of reviving our Tourist Industry - an area of development which I have previously mentioned in the Chamber as one which I have been doing all in my power to advance.

As I was asked by members of the Ardrossan Castle Heritage Society to pursue this matter, can I ask the portfolio holder for Communities what plans are being made by North Ayrshire Council to commemorate this important centenary?”

Response

“None planned.”

Question

(11) a question by Councillor Gallacher to the Leader of the Council in the following terms:-

“Over the last ten years, how many employees have left NAC with a non-disclosure agreement?”

Response

“No employees have left the Council with a non-disclosure agreement.

Confidentiality clauses are a normal part of Settlement Agreements (previously known as Compromise Agreements) and prohibit both the employer and employee from disclosing the terms of the Agreement. These protect the reputation of the employee and the employer. However, they cannot stop either the employee or employer from reporting a criminal offence to the Police. In order to protect employees, employment law provides that an employee must receive independent employment advice from an accredited specialist before entering into a settlement agreement. For example, this was the case in all our equal pay settlements. Any employee entering into a settlement agreement with the Council receives independent specialist employment advice, to ensure they fully understand the terms of the Agreement.

In accordance with our data retention schedule, we only hold the data for the previous 6 years. The total number of Settlement Agreements, excluding Equal Pay claims, entered into since 21 March 2013 is 22.”

Question

(12) The undernoted question by Councillor Marshall to the Cabinet Member for Education has been withdrawn.