



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

Meeting of the Council

Wednesday 20 December 2017

Responses to Questions

Question

- (a) a question by Councillor Foster to the Leader of the Opposition in the following terms:-

"Since 2010, £73m of cuts have been made to North Ayrshire Council's budget. Given the accumulative impact of those cuts on services and jobs, the fact that due inflation and increasing demand for services Council officers have projected that we would need an additional £14m+ in funding in 2018/19 just to stand still and that for every percentage increase in Council Tax less than £600,000 is raised; does the Member think that North Ayrshire Council has received sufficient funding and revenue increasing powers from central government to deliver the services that our communities need?"

Response

Councillor Burns will respond at the meeting.

- (b) a question by Councillor Foster to the Chair of the Planning Committee in the following terms:-

Since 2010, £73m of cuts have been made to North Ayrshire Council's budget. Given the accumulative impact of those cuts on services and jobs, the fact that due inflation and increasing demand for services Council officers have projected that we would need an additional £14m+ in funding in 2018/19 just to stand still and that for every percentage increase in Council Tax less than £600,000 is raised; does the Member think that North Ayrshire Council has received sufficient funding and revenue increasing powers from central government to improve planning services?

Response

"The answer to the question is yes.

Performance - whether improvement or failure in any Public or Private Business or Service is not necessarily a function of the amount of investment or expenditure in the Business or Service.

A prime example is the present SNP Government whose increase in expenditure is often inversely proportional to the performance.

The opposite is the case with North Ayrshire Council Planning Service where a reduction in resources over the last few years has not diminished performance.

For example in the past 2 years, the Planning Service won awards from the Scottish Government for the Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning in the Place Category for their work in 2016 for 'Saltcoats Town Hall' and the 'New House of Meikle Auchengree', and in 2017 for the Plans Category for the North Ayrshire Town Centre Audits.

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In 2017, the Planning Service won the Royal Town Planning Institute award for Excellence in Planning for the Built Heritage for 'Saltcoats Town Hall'.

Finally in terms of performance, for the same period, the Planning Service has been the top performing authority in Scotland for all Local and Householder Planning applications."

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

"Since 2010, £73m of cuts have been made to North Ayrshire Council's budget. Given the accumulative impact of those cuts on services and jobs, the fact that due inflation and increasing demand for services Council officers have projected that we would need an additional £14m+ in funding in 2018/19 just to stand still and that for every percentage increase in Council Tax less than £600,000 is raised; does the Member think that North Ayrshire Council has received sufficient funding and revenue increasing powers from central government to deliver the services that our communities need?"

Response

Councillor Cullinane will respond at the meeting.

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

"There has been a great deal of concern expressed by parents and children in Ardrossan over the closure of the play park adjacent to Stanley Road. Indeed, among the first contacts I have with constituents involved their outrage at this park's closure. When I visited one of our local schools recently, the main question pupils wished to ask me concerned this play park's closure.

Much of the coverage of this issue over the last few months has focussed on Councillor Montgomerie's supposed opposition to this closure and his campaign to have it reinstated.

During the 2016/17 budget process, among the many matters considered, was the removal of old, dangerous or underused play parks. The budget package was agreed by the whole Labour group, including Councillor Montgomerie.

The list of recommendations was brought before the Physical Environment Panel for discussion. Councillor Montgomerie was a member of that panel, and raised no concerns about the proposals. Still less did he reject any.

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Implementation of the proposals was in the hands of the Labour administration, of which Councillor Montgomerie was a member. Specific responsibility for play parks rests with the Place Directorate. You won't be surprised to hear that Councillor Montgomerie is the Cabinet member with specific responsibility for Place.

Could Councillor Montgomerie please tell me how he can now oppose something HE voted for, raised no objection to, and was specifically responsible for implementing?"

Response

Councillor Montgomerie will respond at the meeting.

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

"What is the total amount spent, by project, on Capital Projects in Irvine over the last 5 years?"

Response

"In the last 5 years £74.8m has been spent on capital projects in Irvine, which amounts to 38% of the capital spend for those years. The nature of the capital investment programme is such that a longer term view is required, this confirms investment of £82.8m, an allocation of 28%, which is slightly below the population share."

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

"Following the disappointment of the latest UK budget, can the Leader confirm what steps the Council will take to secure the UK Government's commitment to the Ayrshire Growth Deal?"

Response

"Although disappointing that the AGD did not get a mention in the 2017 budget, we are encouraged by the fact that the UK government clearly wants to continue to support regional economies and growth deals and specifically mentions the desire to commit to further 'ambitious city and regional growth deals' in the Industrial Strategy White paper. Therefore, we remain optimistic, as the Ayrshire Growth Deal proposals are closely aligned to the Industrial Strategy, and all three Ayrshire Authorities are looking to continue to lobby to secure support and commitment to the Ayrshire Deal. To progress this we are:

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1. seeking a meeting with the Secretary of State for Scotland to clarify the UK Government's position on the AGD and to chart a way forward to progress our proposals;
2. exploring with the UK Government the potential for Ayrshire to become the first 'Regional Industry Strategy Pilot' linked to the Industrial Strategy as part of the overall AGD;
3. identifying, linked to the themes of the Industrial Strategy and Government Departments, funding opportunities for individual projects;
4. continuing to lobby the UK Government, the Treasury in particular, and champion the AGD at Westminster to ensure commitment in the Autumn Budget 2018, or before, by
 - working with Ayrshire based members of the House of Lords
 - arranging further meetings in January with contacts to continue to push for the AGD i.e., Jake Berry, Under Secretary of State DCLG and senior Treasury officials
 - targeting Parliamentary debate opportunities throughout the year in conjunction with our Ayrshire MPs
 - building on the relationships and work already achieved with the regional MPs to keep pressure on the UK Government
 - arranging further meetings with Ruth Davidson to follow up on her public support for the AGD
 - continuing the relationship already built with staff at the Scotland Office and through them meeting with BEIS, Treasury and Special Advisors to the PM and Chancellor
5. using local business leaders to canvas their contacts in Government - the first Business Breakfast is taking place on 11th January.
6. continuing to work with the Scottish Government to progress their components of the AGD
7. seeking a joint meeting between senior SG and UKG officials to clarify how we can work together to progress the AGD and deliver on its aspirations in the short term."

- (g) a question by Councillor Billings to the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care in the following terms:-

"At the Cabinet meeting on 29 August 2017, and subsequently ratified at the Integration Joint Board (IJB) held on 14 September 2017, it was agreed to significantly change the way in which public advice services were provided across North Ayrshire. The decision was to promote the services provided by the Council's Money Matters service, and to put a range of other advice services out to competitive tender.

A consequence of the new proposals is that it significantly changes the manner in which North Ayrshire Council supports the North Ayrshire's Citizens Advice Service. The current funding is in the form of a block grant, in return for which Citizens Advice provides a full range of advice services to anybody who requests advice. However, the money is not ring-fenced and enables Citizens Advice to have the assurance that it has sufficient funds to satisfy its office functions. This stability enables the service to attract significant additional funds so that it can provide a wide range of advice services across North Ayrshire.

At the IJB meeting I voiced my concerns that no account had been taken that the new proposals change the way in which the Council's funding of the North Ayrshire Citizens Advice Service, and that this change has the potential to compromise the services provided by Citizens Advice. It should be remembered that Citizens Advice currently receives less than a ¼ of the funding received by Money Matters, and Citizens Advice service is available to everybody, unlike Money Matters who is only for Health and Social Care clients.

I have been contacted by one of my Arran constituents who has informed me that the Citizens Advice service on Arran is being withdrawn with immediate effect and that reductions in staffing within the advice service are planned. It would appear that advice services to the general population of North Ayrshire are already being compromised as I feared when I voiced my concerns at the IJB meeting.

The result for Arran is that there will no longer be an island-based advice service. Therefore, people who find travel to the mainland difficult will no longer have access to one-to-one advice services. I have been advised that many of the advice issues are not suitable for phone conversations.

My question is how will the Council ensure that the people of Arran continue to have access to a comprehensive one-to-one advice service, without having to travel to the mainland or rely on phone services?"

Response

"The decisions taken by Cabinet in August and the Integration Board in September 2017 were designed to bolster North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership's Money Matters Service to enable the team to deliver in-person tribunal representation services for anyone in North Ayrshire who requires such support.

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The Money Matters Team have been temporarily providing this service since NACAS ceased provision and in 2016/17, secured positive outcomes for North Ayrshire residents worth £729,542.15, with a further £1,123,597.58 secured to date in 2017/18.

Following the decision to ensure greater transparency, clarity and probity around the specification of advice services in North Ayrshire notice on the current arrangement with NACAS was issued on 23 October 2017 while work began on the tender process. This notice confirmed that the termination date would be 30 April 2018 and that, in line with the extant Service Level Agreement, current levels of service provision would be maintained until that time.

NACAS have advised of their intention to withdraw outreach services from by 01 January 2018, with clients being directed to the digital and telephone based services offered by NACAS. They have also confirmed that specialist debt advice will cease in January 2018 with NACAS looking to wind down the money advice caseload towards 31 March 2018.

Procurement and Legal advice has been sought on the position NACAS have adopted.

Going forward, the evaluation of the tender submissions for the future provision of advice services will consider the extent to which potential providers will offer outreach services, including to Arran.

In the meantime the Better Off North Ayrshire (BONA) Programme will continue to offer face to face services through their hub in the Michael Lynch Centre in Ardrossan, with travel expenses paid for Arran residents. The Better Off North Ayrshire website offers information, advice and support with completing benefits' applications as well as an Entitle To calculator and job search tool."

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

"Are there any plans to decriminalise the parking enforcement and bring it in house to be enforced by North Ayrshire Council?"

Response

"The Council's Town Centre Parking Strategy 2014 - 2020 outlines the current approach to Town Centre parking, which is to not pursue decriminalised parking enforcement. If being introduced, decriminalised parking enforcement would require to be complemented by the introduction of car parking charging arrangements to assist in the management of traffic within Town Centres and to ensure any such overall approach was financially sustainable. As with all strategies the Town Centre Parking Strategy will continue to be reviewed, where required, to meet any changing circumstances".

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

"Are there any plans to expand, enforce and control the Trading Standards initiative, ("We do not deal with uninvited traders, please leave and don't return")?"

Response

"Trading Standards will continue to work with our partner organisations and communities on various projects to protect vulnerable consumers in our area. Considerable work has already been carried out in respect of bogus workers, telephone scams and mail scams. Most notably this has recently resulted in two individuals receiving substantial prison sentences for such activities on Cumbrae. The team will continue with various initiatives, particularly in and around sheltered housing, such as the roll out of call blockers for those most at risk from financial harm and the distribution of 'no cold calling' stickers to residents groups and generally, in conjunction with Police Scotland, enforce a range of legislation in relation to rogue traders who target our residents."

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

"On behalf of issues raised by my constituents in Whitehirst Park and also the cottages on Meadow Park Road leading to the A737 junction, could I ask the Cabinet Member for Place if there are any plans to upgrade Meadow Park Road from north of the roundabout to where it joins the A737 just north of Dalgarnen Mill?

And would there be any possibility of incorporating appropriate traffic calming measures on the road where it leads to, and passes the cottages and also improving the junction at the A737 itself?

With road safety in mind can NAC Roads add this as a priority road to ensure it is gritted in line with all other priority roads in the area, and can a decision on gritting be made swiftly to provide the greatest possible benefit for all road users during this winter?"

Response

"Meadow Park Road between Dalgarnen Wynd and the A737 is minor rural road linking Whitehirst Park with the A737 Trunk Road. The road is used to provide local access to the A737. Its use has increased over the years with the development and expansion of the Whitehirst Park area. The road is primarily single track and has been improved by the introduction of additional passing places approximately 9 years ago and also some traffic calming measures at Meadow Park Cottages."

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There are currently no proposals for further upgrading or improvements to the junction with the A737. In determining traffic calming requirements, the Roads Service utilise an assessment framework to investigate and prioritise the many requests which are received. This is to gain the greatest road safety benefits from the resources and budgets available to the Council. Meadow Park Road will therefore be further assessed to consider such items as traffic speed and volume data, accident statistics, the environmental character of the route and the type of properties fronting the road. This will inform whether any further traffic calming measures are considered appropriate.

The Council's Winter and Weather Emergencies plan, approved by Cabinet on 14 November 2017, sets down the prioritised framework for winter gritting.

The plan identifies 501 km of road to be gritted as Priority 1 and a further 179 km of road as Priority 2, accounting for over 66% of the overall road network. Meadow Park Road from the roundabout at Dalgarnen Wynd to the A737 has been designated as a Priority 2 gritting route and is gritted in accordance with the agreed Winter Services and Weather Emergencies Plan for 2017/18".

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

"Can the Cabinet Member for Communities quantify, by community centre, the number of opening hours that have been lost to local communities as a result of recently imposed changes made to staffing levels and charges?

Can she also explain how it can be that Community Associations have been told that they may be made responsible for paying for the holiday and sick pay of council employees given that most of the associations do not employ any of the caretaking staff?

Will she agree to immediately establish a Working Group consisting of Officers, Elected Members and representatives from NAFCO to look in depth at these issues and to look at how we can continue to support and develop community centres as a central asset within each of our communities?"

Response

"There has been no significant reduction in staffing levels in comparison to previous months/ years since the core hour allocation was put in place on 1st November. A report from our rota system shows that in November 2016 the scheduled worked hours were 6868 in comparison to November 2017 where scheduled worked hours totalled 6872."

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

"At the last local elections the Labour manifesto stated that 'North Ayrshire Labour will seek to establish an Arts and Culture board, with representatives from key industry bodies on it, to develop an Arts and Culture Strategy for North Ayrshire'.

What stage of the creation of this are we at, and most importantly what does Culture look like in North Ayrshire to an industry that contributes £4.6 billion to Scotland's economy every year?"

Response

"National Culture Strategy and North Ayrshire Cultural Strategy"

We have drafted our new Cultural Ambition Statement (in line with Scottish Government consultation on a new national Cultural Strategy: 'A Culture Strategy for Scotland') and are now working with our partners to add case studies. This is currently being produced in draft by a graphic design company (a local creative industry) before going out for local consultation.

We have contributed to the Scottish Government's Cultural Conversations consultations on several occasions in the ongoing development of our strategy.

Our ambition, within ongoing financial constraints, is to ensure that everyone can take part in cultural and creative experiences.

North Ayrshire Cultural Network: Creative Conversations

Over the past five years we've been working with our creative artists and communities to forge a Cultural Partnership, "Creative Conversations." Together with North Ayrshire's innovative Creative Scotland Place Partnership, worth up to £200,000 over the duration of the agreement, this provides a vibrant network for collaboration, experimentation and growth. It creates a strong foundation for artists and creative groups to work together. Its work includes identifying new audiences as well as potential participants in the arts from within our diverse communities and offering the support they need to thrive. We meet regularly to develop this and Creative Conversations is scheduled to meet Creative Scotland to discuss the Place Partnership in January 2018.

The network rotates around north Ayrshire to encourage participation and is attended by a wide variety of practitioners and industry partners (c.50 partners), and is supported by NAC and Creative Scotland.

Arts and Culture Board

An Arts and Culture Board is in the process of being developed from this base. We want to ensure that our plans are developed, delivered and owned by an empowered community of artists and creative individuals and complement the ambitions of the Locality Partnerships, as a shared endeavour. Timing is everything and the forthcoming publication of the Scottish Government's Culture Strategy will allow the terms of reference to be developed for this board.

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Support for the Creative Industries in North Ayrshire

We are working with economic development partners including Team North Ayrshire business advisers, the Regeneration Team and Business Gateway, including specialists in social enterprises, to provide support, information, business development advice, employability support and opportunities to share and widen access to audiences and local employment and to develop the growing numbers of those embarking on a career in creativity at various stages in life. We are currently mapping and defining what opportunities currently exist, exploring emerging international markets and what can be done with partners to support progression and promotion.

Creative Industries in North Ayrshire

Creative industries (including digital) is one of the Scottish Government's 6 Growth Sectors.

In 2016, the total number of registered creative industries businesses in North Ayrshire was 215 as compared to 200 in 2015.

For the number of businesses this makes creative industries the 4th highest out of the Scottish Government growth sectors in North Ayrshire - ahead of life sciences and energy (including renewables).

In 2014, the turnover of creative industries business in NA was £64.5 million as compared to £58.4m in 2013.

*(Note: Gross value added. Gross value added (**GVA**) is the measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of an economy, in economics).*

2014, the GVA at basic prices of creative industries businesses in NA was £36.2 million as compared to £31.5m in 2013. GVA at basic prices is not available for life sciences and energy, making creative industries the 3rd highest out of 4 sectors, ahead of food and drink.

In 2016, creative industries businesses in NA employed 670 people.

Research

Our research base is growing, with economic impact studies and work carried out by the Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship at Strathclyde University in relation to our creative industries base and the potential to develop markets and audiences, particularly in relation to film, and we have developed links to the Hatchery in Dundonald, with plans for increased investment in and support for creative industries and social enterprises within the new Quarry Road, Irvine development.

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Programmes in North Ayrshire

We continue, within our current financial envelope, to provide access to arts and cultural opportunities through the Harbour Arts Centre and our new or improved venues to bring culture to the heart of local communities. Our performance spaces include Saltcoats Town Hall, the Heritage Centre, Irvine Townhouse, Trinity Church, the Garnock Campus, and community partners such as Fullarton Connexions or the Fullarton Community Centre.

The rapid growth of new festivals and events on Cumbrae, Arran and in Largs, as well as Irvine Harbourside with the Scottish Maritime Museum, provide economic and cultural opportunities for culture and creativity. Arran is using North Ayrshire's Place Partnership with Creative Scotland to develop access and its creative network. Initiatives such as Ayrshire Youth Arts Network and Garnock Connections bring new partners together to innovate and share.

Creative Industries Festival

As part of the Place Partnership funding we are planning a joint Ayrshire celebration of the Creative Industries. It is aimed at three target audiences:

- Those engaged in an arts / creative / cultural further education course of study;
- Those employed in the Creative Industries; and
- The communities of Ayrshire.

Aims include:

- Supporting practising artists through seminars and symposiums and give them opportunities to share their work with other audiences
- Inspiring students through a mentoring programme with the local artists
- Providing communities with access to a plethora of opportunities to see and experience the work of the local creative industries at events, performances and through workshops.

The date for this year will be driven by Ayrshire College and UWS we will work toward this becoming an annual event for Ayrshire.

Our community partnerships are increasing vibrant participation in local communities with new audiences. These include Capall Dorcha in the Three Towns; Centrestage at Ardeer, Pennyburn and Fullarton; the Ardrossan Music Experience; Barrfields in Largs; and Impact Arts activity across our communities. Widespread involvement among communities in a variety of the arts increases community spirit, self-worth and equity.

Our Ambition

We are committed to informing and engaging with artists, creative partners, communities and stakeholders to shape a strategy for culture, creativity and the arts which reflects their aspirations and, through partnership working, optimises the available resources for our communities.”

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

"NAC has recently cut collections of waste for hard pressed residents in North Ayrshire for the second time in as many months. Will the Member commit to no more cuts in the waste collection regime?"

Response

"The change to the organic waste collection frequency was agreed by the Council at its budget setting meeting of 1 March 2017.

At its meeting on 12 December 2017 Cabinet agreed a new Zero Waste Strategy and implementation plan for 2018 – 2022 to enable the Council to meet a range of national legislative requirements and targets, such as the need to recycle 60% of the waste we manage by 2020, and the Household Waste Recycling Charter, which sets down specific collection recommendations around waste streams and capacity.

The strategy sets down a number of changes to collection methodologies that will support greater recycling and help divert some of the 71% of recyclable material that on average is disposed of within the grey residual waste bin away from disposal. These changes will be supported by a comprehensive programme of support for residents to help them make North Ayrshire a more environmentally sustainable area and meet national requirements".

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

"The last SNP administration of North Ayrshire Council achieved record waste recycling rates of 56.5%, the second best in Scotland. Would the Member tell us the current recycling rate?"

Response

"The previous waste strategy agreed in April 2012 enabled the Council to meet the national recycling target of 50% by 2013. The recorded recycling rate for 2016 was 55.3% making North Ayrshire amongst the best recycling areas in Scotland. Performance, to date, during 2017 indicates that a similar rate will be achieved during the current year. The recently approved Zero Waste Strategy will enable the Council to continue improving its recycling performance to meet increasing national targets".

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

"North Ayrshire has committed to building 1500 social houses over the next four years. Would the Member tell me how much of the funding, in percentage and absolute terms, has come from the SNP Scottish Government?"

Response:

"The Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2018-23 (SHIP) sets out the affordable housing investment priorities in North Ayrshire and includes new build homes, refurbished properties and the buy back of ex-local authority properties.

Scottish Government's grant allocation covers a rolling three year funding period and North Ayrshire's allocation for 2018/19-20/21 is £44.271m. Local authorities are advised by the Government to plan their grant allocation with an additional 25% of funding, taking this assumed grant allocation for three years to £55.338m. The SHIP spans five years, therefore an assumed level of grant has been included for the latter 2 years. The funding level used is aligned to the current financial year, 2017/18 at £10.160m, plus an uplift of 25%.

The total grant allocation in the SHIP 2018-2023, including the assumed 25% uplift is therefore £80.738m.

The £80.738m of assumed funding is available to all developing landlords within North Ayrshire ie North Ayrshire Council, Cunninghame Housing Association, Irvine Housing Association and Trust Housing Association. The Scottish Government has set out different new build grant allocations per unit for local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSL) at a rate of £0.059m and £0.072m respectively. Refurbished properties attract a slightly lower grant allocation of £0.057m and buy backs are eligible for around £0.040m. The anticipated grant funding for individual projects is detailed within the SHIP.

The Council's investment in the SHIP 2018-23 is £132m which delivers 872 units across new build properties, refurbished properties and second hand buy backs. Scottish Government grant for the Council's projects equates to around 40% of the overall planned investment requirement.

The RSL estimated development costs are not currently available, therefore the percentage of Scottish Government grant funding for their SHIP projects cannot be confirmed at this time".

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

"The continued investment in social housing by North Ayrshire is to be commended. Does this administration have any plans to progress with a shared ownership model of house building and, if so, what safeguards will be put in place to ensure we do not return to the dark days of council house sales, thus depleting our stock for those most in need?"

Response

"The Local Housing Strategy 2018-22 (LHS) was approved by Cabinet on 12 December 2017. The LHS is accompanied by an ambitious Outcome Plan which details our proposals for action across themes including housing supply, housing condition, specialist housing, placemaking, and homelessness.

In terms of shared ownership, the Outcome Plan includes an action to 'explore the viability of delivering alternative affordable housing delivery models'. Officers are in discussions with Scottish Futures Trust regarding the development of a business case for an accessible home ownership model, which is a type of shared ownership. Whilst this model is still being refined a key aspect will be the retention of a majority stake in each property by the Council thus protecting stock for those who desire this type of housing model.

In terms of Council house provision the approach set out within our Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2018-23 includes a target to buy back at least 20 second hand homes over the five year period of the SHIP. This financial year alone, we are on target to buy back 12 ex-Council homes. This demonstrates our commitment to reversing the decline in social housing stock through our ambitious new build housing proposals, as well as through strategic acquisition of properties lost through right to buy".

- (q) a question by Councillor McMaster to the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care in the following terms:-

"Reports on Arran say that the current Citizens Advice Bureau provision on the Island, consisting of four hours in temporary accommodation every week, is to be removed.

There are also reports that the withdrawal of the service is directly at the behest of North Ayrshire Council.

Would the Member tell me if these reports are accurate and, if so, the reasons for removing this essential service to our Island community at a time of unprecedented austerity and in the face of the negative impact of the roll out of Universal Credit?"

Response

Please refer to the response to Question (g).

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

"The Cabinet has decided to postpone the upgrade of the B714 and make it dependent on central government funding. What concrete confirmation has the Portfolio Holder for Place been given that such funding will become available and when?"

Response

"At its meeting on 14 November 2017 Cabinet agreed to pause local realigning of the B714 pending the development of a Regional Transport Appraisal as part of the developing Ayrshire Growth Deal. The Growth Deal provides an opportunity for both UK and Scottish Government to support our ambition for Ayrshire and we continue to work to secure funding from them. A Transport Summit, with Scottish Government and other stakeholders, has been arranged for 9 February 2018 to inform the development of a Regional Transport Appraisal including the strategic and economic importance of the B714".

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

"New Street in Dalry is one of two streets within North Ayrshire Council to have been assessed as substandard and in need of monitoring in the sense of the Air Quality (Scotland) Regulations 2010. Although the Dalry Bypass, funded and built by the SNP Scottish Government, is anticipated to hugely alleviate any air quality issues on New Street, there is still over a year to go before construction is completed.

According to the Council's 2017 Air Quality Annual Progress Report, NO2 levels in New Street, Dalry have shown an increase since 2016. Can the Portfolio Holder for Place provide an update on how New Street is performing on air quality at the moment and what measures are being taken to ensure this improves while the Bypass is being constructed?"

Response

"The Environmental Health Team monitor air quality at 26 locations throughout North Ayrshire. According to our latest monitoring results one particular area of air quality, near the traffic lights on the A737 in New Street, Dalry is on the threshold of being substandard for the first six month period of this year. Monitoring over a complete year is required as a full assessment is based on Annual Mean results. As intimated in the Council's 2017 Air Quality Annual Progress Report and agreed by the Scottish Government, all relevant locations in Dalry will continue to be monitored until there is confidence that the levels of pollutants will remain below the objective limits following construction of the bypass."