



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

Meeting of the Council

Wednesday 25 September 2019

Responses to Questions

Question

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

“How does one reconcile the fact that there are over 90 persons awaiting a care at home package, 50 persons awaiting an increase in their care packages and almost 50 persons awaiting a Self Directed Payment, with a projected end of year deficit of ca £2.8m in the HSCP Budget?”

Response

I can confirm that whilst there is a projected overspend in the Health and Social Care Partnership budget, as of period four this has now come down to £1.9 million and the IJB will, tomorrow, discuss and agree a mitigation plan to manage this down by the end of the financial year.

The demands for social care services in particular remains very high, with the Partnership currently facilitating an average of 47 Care at Home packages every week from Crosshouse Hospital alone. In addition to this, we support over two thousand people to live safely at home through our Care at Home service and over 5000 people utilising assistive technologies alongside our Community Alert Service. We currently support approximately 800 people to live within a nursing or residential care home setting and over approximately 130 people are supported via Direct Payments. Whilst it is true that our Direct Payments waiting list was over 50 earlier this year, there are presently 11 people waiting on this funding being released. All of our waiting lists are actively managed to ensure that resources can be released to those most in need, as soon as is possible.

We provide support to approximately 400 people with physical conditions, learning disabilities and mental illness to live safely at home via a variety of person-centred supports. In addition, we have approximately 400 young people supported via statutory orders to the Children’s Hearing with some of these young people requiring care in expensive resources to ensure their safety.

The IJB’s aim to provide greater support via prevention and early intervention is a strategy that takes time to achieve. Whilst we have made significant in-roads in many areas of service, we still require to ensure that those most in crisis and most ill are supported effectively.

Providing high quality supports and services to everyone who needs them, within a finite and, in real terms, reducing budget, is undoubtedly challenging. Nevertheless, the IJB and the Partnership team continue to manage the resource as best they can to meet the needs of those requiring care, support and protection.”

Question

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

"Can the Cabinet Member for Place please clarify the current policy regarding dogs being allowed within Children's Playparks"

Response

"Our policy is that dogs are not allowed in play parks. There are signs in a number of our play parks advising that 'no dogs are allowed'".

Question

- (3) a question by Councillor Marshall to the Chair of Audit and Scrutiny in the following terms:-

"Is the Chair of Audit exhibiting hyperbole when endorsing the recent Audit Committee Agenda Item 11- Planning for EU Exit Appendix 2 " no Deal EU Exit - Impacts on North Ayrshire" where at Number 19 the claims were made that " Extreme right wing groups may exacerbate racial tension" and would give rise to "recurrence of Irish troubles - greater sectarian impacts in West Scotland including North Ayrshire" - or is the Chair just being irresponsible?"

Response

"A key role of Audit and Scrutiny Committee is to consider assurance, to ensure the Council has adequate plans in place to identify and deal with risk. Regardless of what one feels about EU Exit, this is a significant issue for North Ayrshire, its people, businesses and Council services. Therefore, on 10 September 2019 the Committee considered a report by the Head of Democratic Services on the Council's planning arrangements for a 'no-deal' exit from the European Union. Appendix 1 to the report detailed the potential reasonable worst-case scenarios of a no-deal EU Exit. All risks were scored 1-5 for likelihood and impact. The risk to which Councillor Marshall refers as being exaggerated, was that relating to Resilience, Crime and Protest. This was one of the lower scoring risk, scoring 8 (2 for likelihood and 4 for impact). This compares to the risk to the economy that scored 20 (4 for likelihood and 5 for impact).

It is worth pointing out that the decision of the Committee was to note the report. There were no amendments and the decision of the Committee was unanimous. Every Member of the Committee, including Councillor Marshall agreed to the decision."

Question

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

“Will the Portfolio Holder for Place inform Members if there has been any time over the past 30 days when any CCTV camera(s) operated by North Ayrshire Council as part of the scheme to enhance public confidence and prevent crime has not been operational: if so which camera(s) and what was the duration of the period during which the camera(s) did not function?”

Response

“North Ayrshire Council currently operates 143 Public Space CCTV cameras and works closely with Police Scotland to prevent incidents of crime and antisocial behaviour and intervene early when they occur.

Over the 30 day period there were nine camera faults reported. Whilst timescales differ depending on the nature of the fault, all were responded to within 12 hours, with remedial work undertaken to have them operational.

Publicly disclosing the exact location of cameras that are out of service at any time could encourage criminal or anti-social behaviour as our CCTV cameras act as a deterrent, even when they are not operational for a period of time.”

Question

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

“On the 9th September the Scottish Government - via the Scottish Futures Trust Programme - confirmed they would give financial backing to North Ayrshire Council for a new Educational and Community facility at the North Shore site in Ardrossan.

Will the Portfolio Holder for Education inform members what other sites were considered for this facility, why were Local Elected Members not informed or consulted on sites, and who made the decision on the preferred site being North Shore in Ardrossan?”

Response

“A site selection exercise was carried out by an officer working group during 2018. This group considered seven potential sites within the Ardrossan settlement boundary. Four of the sites were immediately discounted given their limited size and inability to accommodate a campus proposal.

The remaining three sites (North Shore, the existing Ardrossan Academy site and Laighdykes playing fields) were then assessed against criteria including location, cost, design potential, traffic management, planning, regeneration and impact on education. The inclusion of Winton Primary School into the campus meant that the preferred site had to be located in the catchment of both Ardrossan Academy and Winton Primary. That ruled out the Laighdykes playing fields (which in addition raised concerns over planning and environmental impact/loss of open space).

The North Shore site scored highest against these criteria, particularly in terms of regeneration and impact on education. The site has the size required to develop an innovative campus capable of securing Scottish Futures Trust funding. It would also see the development of a site which has been vacant for over 30 years, and which would make a major contribution to a wider programme of regeneration within central Ardrossan. Cost was also considered to be lower given a combination of the funding potentially available from SFT (since secured), and the cost of accommodating pupils within temporary accommodation should an on-site redevelopment be considered.

Papers were presented to Cabinet on 15 January 2019 and 11 June 2019 which included the intention to develop a new campus facility at the north shore site. The reports recommended that proposals be further developed and that officers proceed to engage with the public on the proposals. A significant engagement process has since been undertaken, with the statutory engagement process to follow. A final decision on the proposal will be taken by Council in 2020 following the statutory consultation process.”

Question

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

“Was the Leader of the Council advised of an increase in civic disturbances occurring in Dalry recently and what work is being undertaken to eradicate antisocial behaviour within our communities?”

Response

“Residents from Dalry recently contacted the Scottish Government regarding an issue of antisocial behaviour at the Dalry train station and were advised to speak to both the Transport Police and the local authority, which they duly did.

The railway station CCTV cameras are monitored by Scotrail and the Transport Police. As a result, the Council’s Antisocial Behaviour Team will only be involved in incidents if Police Scotland request their support. No request for support has been received to date.

There are two public space CCTV cameras in operation within Dalry. The cameras have been used 157 times in the last 12 months to assist with Police Scotland enquiries. The Antisocial Behaviour Team has had no requests for support following initial enquiries.

The Antisocial Behaviour Team, including the CCTV service, work alongside Police Scotland and wider community planning partners to tackle low level crime and antisocial behaviour, with a focus on prevention and early intervention.

The Prevention First group, chaired by Police Scotland, meet to consider intelligence gathered from various sources including:-

- Police crime reports
- Elected member concerns and complaints
- Issues raised by tenants and residents
- ASB complaints
- Issues raised by the business community
- Concerns highlighted by housing providers
- Scottish Fire and Rescue concerns
- Issues raised across the partnership from professional bodies

The partners consider the levels and impact of crime and antisocial behaviour, drawing on the shared evidence to determine emerging priorities. The partners then work together to determine the most effective way to deploy their services to minimise risk, crime and harmful behaviour.”

Question

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

"I am sure we are all grateful to the SNP-led Scottish Government for prioritising the building of a new Ardrossan Academy, as without this intervention such a project could not be achieved at this time. I would like to ask the Cabinet member for Education to provide an accurate figure for the amount of money pledged by the Scottish Government."

Response

"The Council is working closely with the Scottish Government and the Scottish Futures Trust to finalise the details of the proposal. The funding model which supports the Scottish Government Learning Estate Strategy requires Councils to borrow the value of the Scottish Government's contribution, with the Scottish Government providing a 25-year revenue funding stream to meet the costs of this. The estimated value of this is £24.4m."

Question

(8) a question by Councillor Davidson to the Cabinet Member for Communities in the following terms:

Can the Cabinet Member please confirm the total amount spent on the recent refurbishment of the gym at Harvies Leisure Centre, and further, break down the cost on the amounts spent individually on:

- 1) Building construction and all associated costs.
- 2) The gym equipment/machines.
- 3) Any other costs involved"

Response

"The costs for the refurbishment and extension of the gym at Auchendarvie Leisure Centre can be broken down as follows:

Professional fees £2,208 – including site and demolition surveys, structural design package and building warrant.

Gym refurbishment and extension £37,156 – including down takings, structural alterations, electrical and mechanical works, joinery works, new ceilings, partial new flooring, refurbishment of existing flooring, and decoration.

Changing room and stairwell refurbishment £15,034 – including new sanitary ware, installation of wet wall, new showers, new shower ceiling, installation of new drainage, joinery, electrical and mechanical works, installation of a new air conditioning unit and decoration.

Supply of new changing room benches £1,423

Fitness equipment purchase £145,777."

Question

(9) a question by Councillor Billings to the Leader of the Council in the following terms:

“Question to the Leader of the Council:

The ongoing issues with the reliability of the Arran Ferry are well known, added to which at the Council meeting in May 2019 the Council voted that it would be acceptable to have additional disruption whilst the harbour at Ardrossan is being redeveloped. Both these factors are likely to cause significant disruption to the Arran ferry service over the next 2 years at least. How will the Council ensure that the residents on Arran will have equality of access to the full range of Council and health services during this period of increased disruption to the ferry service?”

Response

“Proposals for the redevelopment of Ardrossan Harbour continue to be developed by the Ministerial Task Force. The Task Force agreed a preferred option for the redevelopment works including the realignment of the harbour in February 2019, and it is envisaged that these works will significantly improve the resilience of the service in the long term.

The proposals are currently the subject of the appointment of a design team which will develop the detailed design proposals. It is envisaged that a financial package for the works will be agreed prior to the end of 2019, and that would allow works to then start in mid-2020.

In minimising disruption to service users, it is proposed that a temporary works package to the Irish Berth is implemented prior to the main construction contract to allow the service to continue with minimal disruption. Again designs for these works are currently being developed. The Arran berth, existing terminal building and part of the car park would be closed off as a construction site, with relocated car parking and marshalling space and temporary terminal facilities provided. These would allow the service to operate from the Irish Berth.

It is intended that a full timetable is operated from the Irish berth, allowing equality of access to Council and health services.

It is however recognised that the Irish berth may result in cancellations given prevailing wind conditions. Transport Scotland are therefore considering alternative arrangements to maintain the service when this is the case. Officers are working closely with Transport Scotland and its agencies to ensure that disruption is minimised.

As these proposals are developed, consultation with appropriate council and health services will be undertaken to consider any additional support which needs to be provided during the period of works to ensure equality of service access.”

Question

(10) a question by Councillor Billings to the Cabinet Member for the Economy in the following terms:

“Question to the Cabinet Member for Economy:

At the Council meeting in May 2019 the members were provided with an update on the development plans for Ardrossan Harbour. We were told that construction work would start mid 2020 and that 'The appointment of a dedicated resource to oversee the regeneration at Ardrossan will support and facilitate more and regular consultation and engagement.' Can the member provide the Council and the people of Arran details of when this consultation and engagement will start given that construction is due to begin in around 9 months' time?”

Response

“It remains the intention that construction works will start in mid-2020.

A considerable level of officer resource is already being made available to support the development proposals for the harbour. In addition, an Ardrossan Regeneration Manager will start work for the Council in mid-October focusing not only on the harbour, but the north shore site, town centre and on improving connections between these areas. This will provide, a dedicated resource to coordinate and support engagement and consultation associated with all the Ardrossan regeneration proposals.

Public consultation was undertaken in Brodick and Ardrossan in October 2018 on the preferred design option for the redevelopment of the harbour. In addition the Arran Ferry Committee continue to be represented on the Ardrossan Harbour steering group and are aware of the proposals.

In terms of the detailed design, a design team will be appointed in October to allow the detailed design of the landside works including the terminal building, car parking, marshalling space and public realm links. The need to consult with both mainland and island residents during this design team process is recognised, and it is planned that the appointed design team will engage with the public in November or December 2019.

In addition, local members have recently been briefed on the various developments in Ardrossan, and that is something that officers could support on a regular basis if required.”

Question

(11) a question by Councillor Brahim to the Cabinet Member for the Economy in the following terms:

“Can the Portfolio Holder for Economy advise what progress has been made to ensure the realignment of the B714 will be financed as part of the Ayrshire Growth Deal?”

Response

“The Government is progressing its second Strategic Transport Projects Review, which will consider future investment in all transport modes including the strategic road and rail networks as well as active travel, island connectivity, ferries and buses. As part of the Heads of Terms for the Ayrshire Growth Deal, the Government committed to establishing regional working arrangements to reflect Ayrshire Growth Deal priorities, through the STPR process, and regional workshops have been held, as part of the early development of STPR. Officers have participated in the STPR process to date and will continue to ensure future transport investment reflects North Ayrshire’s priorities which include the realignment of the B714. The financing of future transport projects would be in addition to the current AGD programme.”

Question

(12) a question by Councillor Davidson to the Cabinet Member for Education in the following terms:

"Just before the school summer holidays, via Local Press, the news broke that North Ayrshire Council's Early Years staff were left in Limbo, and in fear of whether they would have a job to return to following the end of summer break six weeks later.

Can the Portfolio holder give me an update on the situation as it is currently, in particular in relation to:

- How many staff members were affected by moves.
- Were maximum efforts made to ensure any final moves were fair to staff, including travelling distances from home to the workplace.
- How staff received these moves and how staff morale is currently perceived to be.
- Most importantly, were there any job losses resulting in NAC staff becoming unemployed."

Response

"Q. How many staff were affected by the moves?"

In relation to the delivery of the 1140 hours early years programme, prior to the summer holiday period the Council worked with 9 early years establishments to realign staff working patterns as result of negotiations with the trade unions. 114 members of staff were employed across these 9 establishments and 6 were required to change their place of work - 5% in total.

Q. Were maximum efforts made to ensure any final moves were fair to staff, including travelling distances from home to the workplace.

Every effort was made to ensure that staff preferences were accommodated and any increase in travel distance to a new place of work was considered.

Q. How staff received these moves and how staff morale is currently perceived to be?"

Our Education Resources Team and trade union colleagues worked hard to support the small number of staff who moved location and this was acknowledged at our most recent JCC meeting. It is also acknowledged that, for some staff, moving workplace can be difficult. However, it is an established practice across the Education Service where we are required to respond to changing pupil rolls. The Senior Manager for Early Years held an in-service event on 16 August 2019, which all Early Years staff attended. Discussion and engagement was extremely positive and all staff engaged well in the various activities which were designed to promote collaboration and collegiality.

Q. Most importantly, were there any job losses resulting in NAC staff becoming unemployed.

There were no redundancies. Early Years is an expanding service and our plans are to increase job opportunities across this sector as we work towards full implementation of 1140 hrs of funded early learning by August 2020."

Question

(13) a question by Councillor Stephen to the Cabinet Member for Place in the following terms:

“When will the report on the levels of contamination at the proposed site of Ardrossan Academy be made public, and how will the public be assured that the site can be made safe for both residents and the school.”

Response

“The report has been made available with the issue of the report to Council on the proposed education and community campus. The results were also the subject of a briefing to Members at the Physical Environment Advisory Panel on 5th September 2019. The full report is accompanied by a non-technical summary.

During the statutory consultation process, information on site conditions and associated site plans will be made available at drop in engagement sessions.

The report concludes that an appropriate remediation strategy can be put in place to make the site suitable for its intended use. The approach to the remediation and development of the site will be to a standard suitable for housing, and therefore above and beyond what would be required for a school site.”

Question

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

“NAC Planning were consulted on the second (EIA) Screening for the Hunterston Decommissioning Site on the 11th March 2019. A reply was sent to Marine Scotland on the 9th April 2019.

What part of the project did NAC consider in order to draw the conclusion that this was not an (EIA) project?”

Response

“The consultation from Marine Scotland was sought because some proposed factors had changed in relation to Marine Scotland’s understanding of the development. Marine Scotland confirmed that the main changes are as follows:

1. An increased volume of dredging
2. Confirmation that the jetty is a replacement and not alterations to existing – Marine Scotland were originally not clear on this point.
3. Additional areas of rock armour to be formed.

In respect of No. 1, dredging is a matter for Marine Scotland and not something for which planning permission is required.

In respect of No. 2 planning permission has been granted for 'replacement and enlargement of existing jetty' 25th April 2018 (ref: 18/00134/PP). Therefore, the Council was always clear that the jetty is a replacement.

In respect of No. 3, most of the additional rock armour to be formed is shown on the approved drawings of the above planning permission. Therefore, this work has planning permission. There are parts of the rock armour next to permitted caisson gates which are not shown on approved planning drawings. Planning will contact Peel Ports for further information on this alteration. Despite further information being required in respect of the rock armour adjacent to the caisson gates, the Council’s response remains the same as previous, that the Council, as Planning Authority, does not consider that EIA is required.”

Question

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

“When considering the original (EIA) screening and planning applications in 2017/2018 and the second (EIA) screening in 2019, what tide lines did NAC use as part of their determination? Was it means high water springs or means low water springs?”

Response

“Planning Permission and consequential EIA screenings would be required for works above the high water mark and below that mark would be the responsibility of Marine Scotland.”

Question

(16) a question by Councillor Murdoch to the Leader of the Council in the following terms:

“Can the Leader of the Council please confirm if anyone at NAC enquired either verbally, or in writing, regarding the availability or procurement of between 70 & 100,000 tonnes of dredged sand from the sea bed at Hunterston and if so what was the sand to be used for?”

Response

“No enquiry has been made as to the availability of sand at Hunterston. The sites landowners Peel Ports have suggested that in cases where material is removed from the sea bed, this can be used in local construction projects if it is deemed suitable by appropriate agencies. No testing of material at Hunterston has taken place.

Initial discussions have suggested that material dredged from Ardrossan Harbour could be used to help raise ground levels at Ardrossan North Shore. Dredging of the Harbour area is required as part of the Harbour works, and any material removed would either be relocated elsewhere on the seabed, or used as construction material if deemed to be suitable. That would first require testing of the material to ensure that it is suitable for use and approval by the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency. This testing has been instructed as part of the design works associated with Ardrossan Harbour.”

Question

(17) a question by Councillor McMaster to the Cabinet Member for the Economy in the following terms:

“In 2020 Scotland celebrates its Coasts and Waters with a Year long programme of events and activities to highlight the impact our waters have had on Scotland; from the formation of outstanding natural features to our industrial heritage. In light of this and with The Coig tourism initiative, and the NAC Tourism Action Plan (2018-2022) in mind, would the Cabinet Member support placing the Waverley’s boiler refit appeal badge on the NAC website in order to raise awareness of the appeal which aims to raise £2.3 million to cover the cost of the refit?

The Waverley is an important part of our Clyde Coast heritage and as the last sea-going paddle steamer in the world plays an integral part in the tourism economy of North Ayrshire’s Clyde Coast and Islands. Through continuing the Clyde Coast tradition of going “Doon the Watter” Waverley brings over 8000 visitors to Arran, with three calls a week to the Island during peak season;(and more scheduled for 2020 due to the new pier at Brodick), regularly carries 1500 to Largs and calls at Cumbrae 2 days a week. Based on 2015 figures this brought £3.5 million to the Scottish tourist economy and the economic impact assessment noted that many Waverley passengers have additional on shore spend which boosts local economies.

Due to the complete failure of her boilers The Waverley had to be removed from service earlier this year and needs help to raise the £2.3million required for a boiler refit. £900 thousand has been raised so far,the refit will be carried out at Dales Marine Services in Greenock and the aim is to have Waverley back in service for the full 2020 summer Clyde season.

Therefore, I ask that the Cabinet Member support efforts to raise awareness of the appeal and help ensure that this unique maritime heritage experience continues to enhance people’s enjoyment of our beautiful coastal waters and Islands and is saved for future generations to appreciate and enjoy”.

Response

“We recognise and welcome the fundraising efforts to bring the Waverley back into service.

The Council’s Corporate Communications team will support these efforts by utilising its available channels to spread the word about the campaign.

The Communications team will highlight the campaign on its social media channels, such as Facebook and Twitter.

In addition, the Communications team will also promote the campaign through its internal media channels, including News in Brief and the Staff News website.

This will help support the wider campaign to raise the necessary funds for the Waverley’s refurbishment work. We wish the campaign well and look forward to seeing the Waverley return to the Firth of Clyde - hopefully as part of the celebrations for the Year of Coasts and Waters in 2020.”