

North Ayrshire Council
4 October 2017

IRVINE, 4 October 2017 - At a Meeting of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Ian Clarkson, Robert Barr, John Bell, Timothy Billings, Joy Brahim, Marie Burns, Joe Cullinane, Scott Davidson, Anthea Dickson, John Easdale, Todd Ferguson, Robert Foster, Scott Gallacher, Alex Gallagher, Margaret George, John Glover, Tony Gurney, Alan Hill, Christina Larsen, Shaun Macaulay, Tom Marshall, Jean McClung, Ellen McMaster, Ronnie McNicol, Louise McPhater, Davina McTiernan, Jimmy Miller, Jim Montgomerie, Ian Murdoch, Donald Reid, Donald L. Reid, Angela Stephen and John Sweeney.

In Attendance

E. Murray, Chief Executive; C. Hatton, Executive Director (Place); K. Yeomans, Executive Director (Economy and Communities); J. Butcher, Executive Director (Education and Youth Employment); S. Brown, Interim Director (Health and Social Care Partnership); L. Friel, Executive Director and M. Hogg, Head of Service (Finance) (Finance and Corporate Support); and A. Fraser, Head of Democratic Support, A. Craig, Senior Manager (Legal Services), M. Gilmour, Senior Communications Officer (Media and Internal Communications) and M. Anderson, Committee Services Team Leader (Chief Executive's Service).

Chair

Provost Clarkson in the Chair.

1. Apologies

The Provost invited intimation of apologies for absence. No apologies were recorded.

2. Declarations of Interest

In terms of Standing Order 10 and Section 5 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, Councillors Hill and McPhater, as Directors of North Ayrshire Ventures Trust, declared an interest in Agenda Item 11 (North Ayrshire Ventures Trust). In terms of the Specific Exclusions to the Councillors' Code of Conduct they were able to take part in consideration of this item.

There were no declarations of the Party Whip.

3. Previous Minutes

The accuracy of the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 28 June 2017, was confirmed and the Minutes signed in accordance with Paragraph 7 (1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, subject to the words "in favour of play parks on Arran" being added, by way of clarification, to the end of paragraph 4 of Item 9 "Unaudited Annual Accounts 2016/17".

4. Provost's Report

The Provost reported on the following matters:-

- attendance at a reception held by the US Consulate General as part of their 4 July celebrations;
- the Royal Garden Party on 4 July 2017, attended together with the Depute Provost;
- the presentation of Duke of Edinburgh Gold Awards to North Ayrshire young people at a ceremony held on 5 July 2017;
- the Aberdeen Asset Management Scottish Open and Scottish Ladies Open held at Dundonald Links in July 2017;
- an event on 13 July 2017 to celebrate the newly renovated Irvine Townhouse, followed by the formal opening of the Portal on 14 July 2017;
- attendance at a reception in Edinburgh International Conference Centre on 22 July 2017 as a guest of the Chinese Consul General, followed by a performance by Yun Nan Province Song and Dance Theatre;
- the closing concert of the Feis Arainn in Arran High School on 28 July 2017;
- the 50th anniversary of the Marymass Folk Festival, which included the launch of an Exhibition in Irvine Townhouse on 3 August 2017;
- the ground breaking ceremony of the Canal Court sheltered housing development in Saltcoats on 4 August 2017;
- a visit by representatives from Henan in China to Greenwood Academy on 12 August 2017 as part of a cultural and educational exchange;
- the traditional Kirkin' of the Council on 13 August 2017 in Irvine's Old Parish Church;
- the success of this year's Marymass Festival, which took place from 17-28 August 2017;
- a reception hosted by the Depute Provost to mark the opening of the Largs Viking Festival on 2 September 2017;
- attendance at the Older People's Forum in the Volunteer Rooms, Irvine, on 12 September 2017;
- the topping out ceremony for Largs Campus, which was held on 18 September 2017;
- the Ayrshire Apprentice of the Year event, which was arranged by Irvine Incorporated Trades and took place on 22 September 2017;
- the Academy of Creative Talent Oscars Night in Ardrossan Indoor Bowling Club on 24 September 2017;
- a meeting of the Scottish Provosts Association on 25 September 2017, held in the COSLA Offices, Edinburgh;

- a meeting on 25 September 2017 with Mr David Muir from Brisbane, Australia, as chair of the estate of Doctor Clem Jones, former long-term Mayor of Brisbane;
- the re-opening of Wellwood Burns Centre and Museum on 28 September 2017 following its renovation as part of the Irvine Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme;
- the world's biggest coffee morning on 29 September 2017 which, in Cunninghame House alone, raised nearly £1,000 for Macmillan Cancer Support;
- the Ayrshire Hospice Ball, which took place in the Seamill Hydro on 29 September 2017, raising over £40,000;
- the Cordiners Trade "Wee Pie" event in the Heckling Shed in Irvine on 2 October 2017; and
- a citizenship ceremony held on 4 October 2017 in Saltcoats Town Hall.

5. Leader's Report

The Leader of the Council reported on the following matters:-

- attendance at the COSLA Convention and Special COSLA Leaders meeting on 30 June 2017;
- the election of Councillor Alison Evison from Aberdeenshire Council and Councillor Graham Houston from Stirlingshire Council as COSLA President and Vice President, respectively;
- the golf symposium which took place at the Gales Hotel on 18 July 2017 and provided a platform for speakers to talk about how young people can unlock their full potential and be successful in their chosen field;
- a visit, on 21 July 2017, to the new Inverclyde National Sports Centre;
- a visit to Ardrossan Academy on 4 August 2017 as part of the week-long Leadership Programme delivered by the Active Schools team;
- recent attendance at the Three Towns Growers, a group which Councillor Miller has been involved in since its inception;
- the opportunity on 8 August 2017 to meet and chat with students from Kilwinning Academy and Irvine Royal Academy following their exam results;
- the 50th anniversary of the Irvine Folk Club and a meeting with its members on 9 August 2017 to view the club's anniversary exhibition at the Townhouse, Irvine;
- the graduation on 10 August 2017 of the a pilot Skills for Life course delivered from North Ayrshire's Early Years Centre in Castlepark, Irvine;
- the successful Picnic in the Park event, which was held on 10 August 2017 and organised by Councillor Donald Reid and the team at Kilwinning Community Events;
- the launch of period poverty on 17 August 2017 and the roll out of free sanitary products for young people in secondary schools;
- a visit on 14 August 2017 to North Ayrshire Table Tennis Club, which has been successful in competing on a national and international stage;
- the official opening of Cheviot Gardens on 23 August 2017, which includes a bespoke house to meet the complex needs of a family with a number of accessibility requires;
- attendance at the Locality Conference at Fullarton Connexions on 21 August 2017;

- the COSLA Leaders meeting which took place on 25 August 2017;
- participation in the Islands Bill consultation event on Arran on 28 August 2017, which, together with a similar event on Cumbrae the previous week, helped inform the Council's submission in respect of the Bill;
- the Family Learning Team's first birthday at an event on 1 September 2017;
- attendance at Kilwinning Academy's senior prize-giving on 7 September 2017;
- the official opening of the Fullarton Community Hub on 7 September 2017;
- a meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport on 13 September 2017, to discuss health and social care issues in North Ayrshire;
- the successful Joint Youth Cabinet meeting at Auchenhavie Academy on 19 September 2017;
- attendance at the Community Planning Partnership Board meeting in Fullarton Community Hub on 21 September 2017;
- a visit to Arran on 27 September 2017 for follow-up discussions with the Arran Economic Group on plans for more affordable housing on the island;
- a meeting of the Economic Development and Regeneration Board on 28 September 2017;
- the COSLA Leaders group meeting in Edinburgh on 29 September 2017;
- an event held at the Hallmark Hotel, Irvine on 29 September 2017 to celebrate the work being carried out by education staff; and
- the Council's success in being recognised as this year's APSE "UK Council of the Year and the role of staff in this achievement.

6. North Ayrshire Council Minute Volume

Submitted for noting and approval of any recommendations contained therein, the Minutes of meetings of committees of the Council held in the period 22 June to 26 September 2017.

Noted.

7. North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Board: Minutes of Meeting held on 1 June 2017

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the Minutes of the meeting of the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Board held on 1 June 2017.

The Chief Executive provided a verbal update, advising that Members' briefings would be arranged in respect of the roll out of Universal Credit, and that the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) had been approved by the CPP Board at its 21 September 2017 meeting, the Minutes of which would be submitted to the next meeting of the Council.

Noted.

8. Appointments to Committees

In terms of Standing Order 7.2, the Council was invited to note any resignations from Committees and subsequent appointments made by the relevant political Groups.

The Council agreed, in respect of the Appeals Committee, to note the resignation of Councillor Ferguson and the appointment of Councillor Glover.

9. Appointments to Outside Bodies

The Council was invited to consider nominations made in respect of current outside body vacancies.

The Council agreed:-

Landfill Advisory Fund Panel

A nomination, duly proposed and seconded, was submitted in respect of the appointment of Councillor McNicol to fill the remaining vacancy on the Landfill Advisory Fund Panel. There being no further nominations, Councillor McNicol was duly appointed.

Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme Joint Committee

A nomination, duly proposed and seconded, was submitted in respect of the appointment of Councillor Donald L. Reid as a substitute representative on the Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme Joint Committee. There being no further nominations, Councillor Donald L. Reid was duly appointed.

10. Appointment of Proper Officer

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the appointment of Aileen Craig, Senior Manager, Legal Services as Clerk of North Ayrshire Licensing Board in terms of Schedule 1 Paragraph 8 of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 and as Proper Officer in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

The Council agreed to approve the appointment of Aileen Craig, Senior Manager, Legal Services as (i) Proper Officer for the authentication and execution of documents on behalf of the Council in terms of Section 193 and 194 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and (ii) Clerk of North Ayrshire Licensing Board.

Councillor Montgomerie joined the meeting at this point.

11. North Ayrshire Ventures Trust

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the appointment of a new Director on the Board of North Ayrshire Ventures Trust following the resignation of Craig Crosthwaite.

The Council agreed to approve the appointment of Ann Robertson MBE to the Board of North Ayrshire Ventures Trust.

12. Committee Timetable 2018

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the draft committee timetable for 2018.

The Council agreed:-

- (a) to approve the draft timetable set out at Appendix 1 to the report; and
- (b) to note that arrangements for Locality Partnership meetings, Integration Joint Board, IJB Performance and Audit Committee, and any ad hoc or Special Meetings would be intimated to Members in due course.

13. Long Term Financial Outlook 2018/19 to 2027/28

Submitted report by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on the significant financial challenge faced by the Council over the next ten years and the proposed approach to respond to this. The detailed Financial Outlook 2018/19 to 2027/28 report was set out in the appendix to the report.

The Head of Service (Finance) (Finance and Corporate Support) provided a presentation on the key issues facing the Council and their projected impact in budgetary terms. In response to a request by Councillor Marshall, the Head of Service undertook to provide a copy of the presentation slides.

The Council agreed, in considering the long term financial outlook and noting the scale of the financial challenge faced by the Council over the next ten years, to approve the approach to respond to this, as set out in the appendix to the report.

14. Review of Health and Social Care Integration Scheme in North Ayrshire

Submitted report by the Interim Director (Health and Social Care Partnership) on the finding of Stage 1 of the Review of the Integration Scheme for North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership and on the proposed next steps.

The Council agreed:-

- (a) to note the representations received in response to the first stage of the review of the North Ayrshire Integration Scheme, as summarised at Appendix 2 to the report;

- (b) that further consideration be given with partners and the Scottish Government to the issues identified in Section 2.15 of the report;
- (c) that, pending (b) above, it was premature to amend the North Ayrshire Integration Scheme and any further review of the Scheme be held in abeyance meantime;
- (d) to receive a future report detailing progress made in addressing the issues raised in the review; and
- (e) to note the report would be considered at the NHS Ayrshire and Arran Health Board Meeting on 9 October 2017.

15. Questions

In terms of Standing Order No. 12 there were submitted the following questions:-

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

"A recent study by Bath University into the working conditions of Scottish Teachers reported that Teachers working conditions are poor in that they suffer from high levels of demand, poor support from management, at times strained relationships at work, a poor understanding of their role in an organisation and have to deal with constant change to the curriculum.

Furthermore they are exposed to high levels of poor student behaviour with approximately 40% of Primary Staff exposed to negative parental behaviour. The upshot of all of this is that majority of Staff are dissatisfied with the job and over 40% are planning on leaving the job in the next 18 months.

What measures will the Portfolio Holder now implement to improve the working conditions of Teaching Staff to ensure that in 18 months time we do not have a staffing crisis in North Ayrshire?"

Councillor Bell thanked the Member for his question and responded in the following terms:-

"I read the report to which the Member refers with great interest. The Member will be aware that the report considers working conditions to mean a range of things all of which this Administration has a strong track record of supporting and developing.

Staff across North Ayrshire as evidenced by our own engagement surveys indicate that education staff were more engaged than other departments in 2015, with 69.6% of staff indicating that they were completely engaged.

The Administration continues to invest significantly in improving the physical environment across our education estate providing high quality facilities for young people, staff and communities. In addition, the Administration is focused on supporting the welfare of our staff through LiveWell, Occupational Health support, as well as, counselling devices based in our schools. The award winning Professional Learning Academy continues and will continue to deliver high quality training and support. We continue to invest in leadership development that will ensure we have a long term capacity to lead and deliver high quality education. The Administration supports the probationer development programme which will ensure new entrants to the profession get the best possible start to their careers which will clearly improve outcomes for young people. Approaches to early years staff development are sector leading and we anticipate not only a significant growth in well paid jobs becoming available for North Ayrshire residents over the next few years but that these will also reflect an investment in delivering quality.

The Administration is committed to reducing bureaucracy in our schools. Our teachers have the lowest absence rates of any local authority in Scotland reflecting their commitment and engagement with the Directorates vision for improvement. The Authority has relatively low rates of exclusion and high attendance levels for its pupils. Fortunately violence and confrontation in our classrooms is also comparably low and Teachers receive good support in dealing with such issues in a restorative way which recognises children's additional support needs and rights to a high quality education.

In conclusion, our schools have a strong supportive ethos lead by excellent committed staff and as the report indicates we will support attempts to reduce demands on the profession in the short term with a long term investment in staff training and development being seen as a priority. Of course the Administration will continue to challenge external attempts to increase pressures on staff."

As a supplementary question, Councillor Marshall asked whether, given that only 44% of places for post-graduate training in Mathematics had been filled nationally, the Cabinet Member could provide reassurance that all schools in North Ayrshire would be fully staffed in STEM subjects in the next and future years.

Councillor Bell responded by making reference to the work being done in North Ayrshire to engage with staff, on staff retention, and to support probationers. He acknowledged that, to ensure full staffing in the longer term, there would need to be an increase in recruitment and work done to make teaching a profession to which people would aspire.

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

"I ask the Portfolio Holder for Place what action he has taken regarding public safety at the railway pedestrian tunnel between Pennyburn and Blacklands, and if he will commit to working with me in driving forward improvements to the area including the fitting of CCTV and appropriate lighting, working with network rail on suggestions from the Kilwinning community, and looking at the possibility of re-routing the footpath around the front of the trees as an alternative to the existing path which runs railside behind trees?"

Councillor Montgomerie thanked the Member for his question and responded in the following terms:-

"Our Community Safety Team have been working closely with Police Scotland to develop an integrated response to community concerns following the recent robberies and review wider community safety issues within the Kilwinning area.

Police Scotland deployed enhanced resources within the area to provide public reassurance, whilst actively pursuing the perpetrator of the crimes. Working alongside the local community, Police Scotland apprehended a 33 year old male in relation to the recent robberies

A coordinated approach to reviewing and responding to community concerns in and around the area of the pedestrian walk-way is being developed and will begin with an Environmental Visual Audit of the area, coordinated via the Prevention First initiative. Our Community Safety Team is working with Police Scotland to develop the audit which I expect to take place in the next few weeks. Invites to participate will be issued to all appropriate parties including Elected Members, local community representatives, Network Rail, British Transport Police and other services of the Council. The review will consider a range of issues including lighting, CCTV and walking routes along with any other improvements identified during the audit."

As a supplementary question, Councillor Davidson asked whether the Cabinet Member could keep him informed of any work to take forward the actions identified.

Councillor Montgomerie confirmed that he would do so.

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

"Following constituent queries from numerous classroom assistants and teaching staff from across Kilwinning, on behalf of my constituents, I ask the Council Leader - do North Ayrshire Labour regard Classroom Assistants in Kilwinning Schools as Quality Support Staff?"

Councillor Cullinane thanked the Member for his question and responded in the following terms:-

“The Administration consider all staff in all of our schools to be providing high quality support for our children's learning and development. It is important to have a range of skills and experience within our school staff in order for our schools to provide a holistic approach to learning and support. Equally the Council continues to be offer appropriate relevant training to improve staffs skills as we continue to deliver improved outcomes across the service.

The identified additional support needs of children and young people are not only met by staff from Education. A wide range of Council staff, including Youth Workers, as well as those from the Health and Social Care Partnership, Voluntary Sector and Community Planning Partnership all contribute to delivering positive outcomes for our young people. It is this ‘Team around the Child’ approach that is delivering improving outcomes. The Council is also committed to giving children the best possible start in life. Our Early Years staff and their partners are also key to delivering a quality service that supports needs across the Authority.”

As a supplementary question, Councillor Davidson asked why, given the reference made by Labour in its recent local government election campaign to supporting 'quality support staff' in schools, they would then axe 67 classroom assistant jobs just a few months later.

Councillor Cullinane responded by providing some contextual information, pointing out that the 17/18 budget of £1,705,311 set by the Labour Administration for classroom assistants had been identical to the 16/17 budget set by the then SNP Administration. He referred to an overspend of £664,877 in the previous SNP Administration's 2016/17 education budget and to the previous SNP Education portfolio-holder's statement, at a meeting of the Council in June 2016, about an overspend of some £520,000 in the 2015/16 budget. Councillor Cullinane advised that Education officers had, on an operational basis, undertaken a re-modelling of classroom assistant allocation to schools. The Leader concluded by advising that the Labour Administration had ensured all affected classroom assistants whose temporary contracts were not renewed, had been redeployed, with 30 receiving training to higher grade posts, while the Council had also appointed 27 nurture classroom assistants using the Attainment Challenge funding. Schools were also using their Pupil Equity funding to recruit 47 classroom assistants.

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

"In North Ayrshire Labours manifesto for the council election, they commit to ensuring all our beaches are fully accessible for people with disabilities, something I absolutely welcome. Following a constituent query from a couple in Whitehirst Park who both have physical limitations, I ask the Portfolio Holder for Place if he could provide me with an insight into the plans and timescales for providing disabled access to Irvine, Ardeer and Stevenston beaches and also a description of what the disabled access will consist of?"

Councillor Montgomerie thanked the Member for his question and responded in the following terms:-

“Good progress has been made to identify and develop two initiatives that will improve accessibility to our beaches.

The first scheme, for which a funding application is being submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund’s Landscape Partnership programme, enables visitors to access the beach utilising either a demountable adaptation to their own wheelchair or using a beach specific wheelchair. A similar system that operates successfully in North Berwick has informed the development of proposals. The outcome of the funding application is expected by March 2018.

The second scheme, which is currently at the assessment stage, seeks to construct ramps at key access points to our main amenity beaches. This assessment work, which will be finalised over the next few months, will identify appropriate structures and the costs involved to inform budgetary requirements.”

As a supplementary question, Councillor Davidson asked whether the Cabinet Member would undertake to keep him informed of any notable developments.

Councillor Montgomerie responded by confirming that he would do so.

(e) a question by Councillor Donald L. Reid to the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care in the following terms:-

"On Wednesday 30 August Keith Robson, Chief Executive of Age Scotland gave an interview to the press explaining how well Free Personal Care for the Elderly was working in Scotland. This policy is indeed working well throughout Scotland, but North Ayrshire Council Health and Social Care Partnership appears to have implemented a policy to ration Free Personal Care on 15 June 2017, contrary to Scottish Government policy and without consulting the North Ayrshire Integration Joint Board.

During those 10 weeks of rationing, the waiting list for Free Personal Care, either the non-means tested element of £171 per week or the means tested assisted care element, grew to over 100, meaning that the most vulnerable in our community effectively subsidised the Council by a minimum of £171,000 (£171 x 100 X 10). And as of 13 September 2017, there were still 100 people in North Ayrshire being denied Free Personal Care.

Would the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care explain why such a major policy change, affecting the lives of many families, was not ratified by the Integration Joint Board before it was implemented?"

Councillor Foster thanked the Member for his question and responded in the following terms:-

"The decision taken by the Health and Social Care Partnership Management team was not a policy change but an operational decision based on budgetary pressures. Officers cannot overspend the budget which has been set. The demand on the Partnership budget continues to be significant and this was discussed fully at the Integration Joint Board of the 14th of September. At that meeting, a decision was taken around a raft of mitigation measures which, ultimately, allows for a return to previous rates of admission to Care Homes."

As a supplementary question, Councillor Donald L. Reid asked whether, in the interests of transparency, the Council would change its current guidance to make it clear that the £171 weekly allowance for Free Personal Care was not mandatory and write to the Scottish Government to ask that its guidance to the public also be amended.

Councillor Foster responded by undertaking to hold a meeting with the Member, the Chief Executive and the Interim Director (Health and Social Care Partnership) to discuss this matter further. He also expressed a desire to ensure that care was provided to all those who needed it, but acknowledged that this had to be set against significant budgetary constraints.

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

"The Labour Party has recently announced that they will no longer use PFI contracts and that they will bring existing contracts back in to the public sector.

It goes without saying that the SNP welcome this and the fact that, as with so many other elements of public policy, Labour have now adopted long standing SNP policy.

Would the Leader of the Council now accept that the North Ayrshire PFI contracts, entered into by previous Labour administrations, have been an extravagant waste of public money?"

Councillor Cullinane thanked the Member for her question and responded in the following terms:-

"At the start I should point out this has been deemed a political question and therefore I have been advised the response should be a political response from me.

It probably won't be news to many in this chamber but I have always opposed private finance initiatives as a means of funding public infrastructure projects whether it be the Tories' PFI, Labour's PPP or the SNP's NPD deals.

The issue lies with central government who dictate what financial schemes are available to fund projects. As is the case now with NPD deals, the choice previous council administrations across the country have faced is whether to build new schools under PPP/NPD or not to build them at all. That's the reality of local authorities' options.

In terms of the more political aspects of Cllr Larsen's question I would question the accuracy of the claims. If buying back existing contracts is SNP policy I am sure the Member will be able to tell us which deals in Scotland have been bought out by the SNP Government? Similarly, I await a date for the end of the NPD model and look forward to see how it will be replaced with a non private finance initiative. If that information is not forthcoming in the supplementary I am sure it will be when we debate the motion, asking the Council to back Labour's current policy, later in the agenda."

As a supplementary question, Councillor Larsen asked whether the Leader had a costed plan for addressing the PPP/PFI matter, or whether he intended to wait for the SNP to fix it.

Councillor Cullinane responded by acknowledging the approximate cost of PPP contracts in terms of monthly charges and comparing this with the financial arrangements associated with the new Largs Campus.

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

"The new Arran ferry, Glen Sannox, is scheduled to come in to service in autumn of 2018. There is a commitment for Arran to have a 2-boat service all year, which will not be possible until the new ferry comes in to service. A more comprehensive ferry service has the potential to have a significant positive impact on the lives of the residents of Arran. Could the Council receive an update on the promised redevelopment of Ardrossan Harbour and an assurance that the harbour will be ready for the new ferry in Autumn 2018?"

Councillor Gallagher thanked the Member for his question and responded in the following terms:-

"The importance of the ferry service to Arran, and the positive impact that a comprehensive service can have for the island is very clear. Arran has seen a significant rise in passenger numbers in recent years which has been positive for the economy. It is intended that the new ferry will provide additional capacity and potential for growth.

The importance of the ferry service, the benefits its presence brings to Ardrossan, and that the Ardrossan route offers the best service for Arran were all reflected in the priority given to the Save Our Ferry campaign in late 2016/early 2017. It was the success of this campaign by the Council and community partners that has allowed the Scottish Government to make a commitment to Ardrossan and for the Council and Peel Ports to deliver significant investment in the harbour area.

Officers have also been working closely with the Arran Economic Group for the past four years. The initial success of this group was the delivery of the Brodick harbour investment within a single phase of construction, and the new facilities are due to be opened in October. The AEG are also working to ensure additional housing options to help retain young people and staff on the island. The Council have recently announced the delivery of 46 homes on Arran in the next 10 years, and the group are considering options for how a development trust may help to facilitate additional housing.

In terms of investment at Ardrossan, since the confirmation of Ardrossan as the mainland port for Arran and Campbeltown ferries, all parties including, NAC, Peelports, Transport Scotland, CMAL and Calmac have been working to develop plans for both the land based and marine infrastructure. As part of this due diligence and port master planning, options have emerged to further improve the long term resilience of Ardrossan.

We are working to determine how to best accommodate these options as part of the overall programme for investment into the harbour in order to deliver the optimal solution to secure the long term resilience for the harbour. Further updates will be provided as this work progresses.”

Cllr Gallagher also added he would like to offer all Member a Private Members Briefing on the matter over the next few weeks and Cllr Billings confirmed he would therefore keep any supplementary questions for the Briefing.

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

"Can the Leader of the Council advise if he has had or plans to have any meetings/discussions with Scottish Government Ministers /officials which would be of importance to the Council?"

Councillor Cullinane thanked the Member for his question and responded in the following terms:-

“I can confirm that on 13 September I met with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport, Shona Robison to discuss the health and social care in North Ayrshire, in particular, the demographics and future implications for care including service demand. I also undertook to seek their agreement to strengthen their commitment to working with us in the future to transform and improve current social care services.

I can also advise that as part of the Ayrshire Growth Deal work that a Transport Summit will be held in the coming weeks with Ministerial engagement.”

As a supplementary question, Councillor Reid, referring to the transport summit and asked whether the the Leader would agree to pursue with Ministers the importance of addressing the issue of the missing link between Wilson's Auctions and Sharpill when considering the B714 project.

Councillor Cullinane responded by indicating he was happy to do this on Councillor Reid's behalf and on behalf of other Kilwinning Ward Members.

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

"Now that the work at Countess Street, Saltcoats is near completion, will the Policyholder for Place inform the Elected Members of the value of the initial contract to refurbish the Street, how much was paid by Irvine Bay Regeneration Company to Land Engineering (up to the point of Land Engineering going into Administration) and what was the value of the work completed at the point of Administration? Will he also provide the final cost payable by North Ayrshire Council to complete the works?"

Councillor Montgomerie thanked the Member for his question and responded in the following terms:-

"The initial contract was awarded to Land Engineering at £812,902 on 4 August 2016. The amount paid to Land Engineering up to the point of entering Administration was £440,925 which was paid by the Council following the transfer of funds from IBRC. The value of work completed at point of Administration was £603,179 (estimated Final Account as advised by Neilson Partnership). The value of the contract with Rainton Construction who will complete the remaining works is £262,000."

As a supplementary question, Councillor McNicol asked the Cabinet Member to confirm whether plans had been submitted to the Council for the refurbishment of Dockhead Street, Saltcoats, and when these works would be commenced.

Councillor Montgomerie responded by advising that he had no information on this matter at present, but would circulate details to all Members when available.

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

"Due to the change in the Political Party structure of Elected Members after the Local Elections in May, 2017, will the Leader of the Council provide details of the costs for the creation of an additional Members room in the First Floor East within Cunninghame House?"

Councillor Cullinane thanked the Member for his question and responded in the following terms:-

"The cost of the alteration works was £31,563.41."

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

"Will the Leader of the Council provide details of all PPP/PFI Contracts entered into by North Ayrshire Council?"

Councillor Cullinane thanked the Member for his question and responded in the following terms:-

“The Council currently has a PPP contract for 4 schools at St Mathews, Greenwood, Arran High and Stanley Primary School. The Council has also entered into an NPD contract for the provision of Largs Campus. The monthly unitary charge is £988,183 for our existing PPP contracts. The estimated monthly unitary charge linked to Largs is £332,218 per month.”

As a supplementary question, Councillor McNicol asked whether the Leader would agree with him that funding by PPP did not represent best value for money or whether he agreed with the view expressed by former Leader of the Council, Councillor David O'Neill at a Council meeting in 2012 that this procurement method was cost effective.

Councillor Cullinane responded by advising that he was not a Member of the Council when this issue was discussed, but that he was ideologically opposed to PPP and that changes in international accounting standards now appeared to have eroded any budgeting incentives which might have been associated with this financing approach. However the choice at the time had been between building the school under PPP or not at all.

The Council then adjourned for a short comfort break at 3.40 p.m., reconvening at 3.55 p.m. with the same Members and Officers present and in attendance.

16. Motions

In terms of Standing Order No. 13 there were submitted the following:-

- (a) a motion by Councillor Cullinane, seconded by Councillor Foster in the following terms:-

"One of the most important roles that the Council, and indeed Councillors, have is as corporate parents to our young people in care. This Council treats this responsibility with the upmost regard and has taken numerous steps to support our care experienced young people through initiatives such as guaranteed modern apprenticeship places. We acknowledge the financial challenges for young people leaving care including Council Tax. Whilst a number of local authorities in England have exempted care leavers from Council Tax, local authorities in Scotland do not have the delegated powers to do so. This council therefore resolves to lobby the Scottish Government for these powers, either through a change to the Local Government Finance Act 1992 or new council tax exemption regulations. The Council agrees that the Chief Executive shall write to the Scottish Government to seek such powers and thereafter asks officers to bring a report to the Cabinet outlining options for an exemption."

In terms of Standing Order 14.7 and with the agreement of Councillors Cullinane and Foster, the motion was amended to provide for the report in question to be submitted to the full Council. There being no further amendments, the motion, as amended, was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Council agreed:-

"One of the most important roles that the Council, and indeed Councillors, have is as corporate parents to our young people in care. This Council treats this responsibility with the upmost regard and has taken numerous steps to support our care experienced young people through initiatives such as guaranteed modern apprenticeship places. We acknowledge the financial challenges for young people leaving care including Council Tax. Whilst a number of local authorities in England have exempted care leavers from Council Tax, local authorities in Scotland do not have the delegated powers to do so. This council therefore resolves to lobby the Scottish Government for these powers, either through a change to the Local Government Finance Act 1992 or new council tax exemption regulations. The Council agrees that the Chief Executive shall write to the Scottish Government to seek such powers and thereafter asks officers to bring a report to the Council outlining options for an exemption."

(b) a motion by Councillor Gallagher, seconded by Councillor Foster in the following terms:-

"With Universal Credit full service due to be rolled out in North Ayrshire on 27th November 2017 this Council wishes to join third sector organisations and a number of cross party Parliamentarians in calling for the UK Government to halt the roll-out process.

Universal Credit was meant to simplify the UK's social security system but there is growing evidence from bodies such as Citizens Advice that its implementation has pushed many people and families into debt and poverty as they struggle to make ends meet. Evidence from across the initial roll-out areas highlight an increase in rent arrears, a near 87% increase in Crisis Grant applications and a 40-70% increase in families going to food banks for support.

This Council is particularly concerned about the impact of the six week waiting time for new claimants to receive payments with roll-out in North Ayrshire planned in the run up to Christmas. This Council therefore resolves that the Leader writes to the UK Government adding our voice to the calls for the roll-out of Universal Credit to be stopped.

In the interim, Council notes that officers will continue to raise awareness of the scheduled roll-out on the 27th November so that local people are prepared for the changes ahead."

As an amendment, Councillor Marshall, seconded by Councillor Ferguson, moved the terms of the motion, subject to the deletion of "adding our voice to the calls for the roll-out of Universal Credit to be stopped" from the penultimate paragraph and the insertion of the words "supporting the principle of Universal Credit".

Members then asked questions of the movers of the motion and amendment, including seeking clarification that roll-out was scheduled for 22, rather than 27 November 2017.

Following debate and summing up, on a division there voted for the amendment 6 and for the motion 25, and the the motion was declared carried.

(c) a motion by Councillor Cullinane, seconded by Councillor Gallagher in the following terms:-

"To congratulate North Ayrshire Council on achieving the 'Council of the Year' award at the annual Association of Public Sector Excellence (APSE) awards 2017.

This prestigious award reflects the efforts of all North Ayrshire Staff over a number of years in improving and transforming the way we deliver our services to the people of North Ayrshire.

Also to congratulate the North Ayrshire Council 'Change' team on having won the Best Efficiency and Transformation Initiative at the same event.

These awards, and the many others gained by our staff over recent years, are as a result of the truly excellent achievements of our workforce and reflect great credit on everyone who works within North Ayrshire to serve our communities"

There being no amendment, the motion was declared carried.

The Chief Executive undertook to ensure that the terms of the motion were communicated to Council staff.

(d) a motion by Councillor Dickson, seconded by Councillor Larsen in the following terms:-

"That North Ayrshire Council wishes to recognise the important role that many employees play in being carers; recognises that the policies and support employers have in place helps families to manage their caring requirements; and so North Ayrshire Council resolves to pursue accreditation as a Carer Positive employer; notes that there are three levels of accreditation (engaged, established and exemplary); and instructs officers to work to become recognised as a Carer Positive employer at the highest level to ensure the council maintains its reputation as 'employer of choice' in North Ayrshire.

There are no material cost implications in becoming an accredited Carer Positive employer as the benefits of supported working reduces stress and sickness absence, improves people management and staff morale, and reduces recruitment and training costs."

There being no amendment, the motion was declared carried.

(e) a motion by Councillor Foster, seconded by Councillor Cullinane in the following terms:-

"In accordance with Scottish Labour Party policy, agreed in 2015 following a motion by Cunninghame South CLP, this Council agrees to lobby the Scottish Government to end all private finance initiative schemes as a way of funding major public infrastructure projects and calls on them to establish a debt disposal unit aimed at buying back existing PFI, PPP and NPD contracts now that financial regulations have changed. We make this call following the announcement of a similar policy by the UK Labour Party.

Should the Scottish Government fail to act, this Council instructs officers to keep our PPP contracts under review and seek opportunities to buy them back using the PWLB in accordance with the administrations aspirations. We recognise that any such deal will require Scottish Government agreement and note, to date, that the Finance Secretary has failed to give an assurance of his support in correspondence with the Council Leader."

As an amendment, Councillor Hill, seconded by Councillor Dickson, moved that the initial paragraph of the motion be deleted and the second amended to read "This Council instructs officers to keep our PPP contracts under review and seek opportunities to buy them back using the PWLB or any other affordable means."

In terms of Standing Order 14.7 and with the agreement of Councillors Foster and Cullinane, the motion was amended to accept the terms of Councillor Hill's amendment. There being no further amendments, the motion, as amended, was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Council agreed:-

"This Council instructs officers to keep our PPP contracts under review and seek opportunities to buy them back using the PWLB or any other affordable means."

The Meeting ended at 4.45 p.m.