



North Ayrshire Council

Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

Meeting of the Council

Wednesday 15 February 2023

Responses to Questions

Question

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

“Following the alarming and informative article in The Herald on 4th February 2023 about the potential closure of the Arran Outdoor Education Centre, what steps is the Council taking to ensure that this ‘World Class’ facility is able to continue its ‘transformative’ work which positively impacts every pupils’ ‘attitude, self-esteem, confidence, resilience, teamwork, ambition, determination, work ethic, achievement, mental health, independence and social and emotional behaviour’?”

Response

Councillor Macaulay will respond.

Question

- (2) a question by Councillor Montgomerie to the Cabinet Member for Economy and Climate Change in the following terms:

“Under the last Administration, North Ayrshire is now the second highest performing local authority in Scotland for recycling. Other local authorities have introduced garden waste charges. Can the Cabinet Member tell me what impact introducing these waste collection charges has had on recycling rates in those council areas?”

Response

“Based on the information received from Councils who have shared their high-level data, the potential change in household recycling performance that may result from the introduction of garden waste collection charges is estimated at -1.8% in the overall recycling rate.”

Question

- (3) a question by Councillor Murdoch to the Cabinet Member for the Economy and Climate Change in the following terms:

“Is the Cabinet Member happy with North Ayrshire Council’s procedure for dealing with potholes and other faults on roads and footways?”

Response

Councillor Gurney will respond.

Question

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

“As I’m sure all Councillors here I am spending a lot of time answering emails on potholes and the state of some of our pavements. Can I ask the Cabinet Member for a total of compensation that North Ayrshire has paid out over the past year for claims against Council for vehicle repairs and personal accidents.”

Response

“Since 1 April 2022, the Council has received 23 personal injury claims relating to potholes and pavement defects. To date no personal injury compensation has been paid for this period. For this period to date there are currently 17 open personal injury claims that are being handled by the Council’s Insurers.

Since 1 April 2022 the Council has received 91 property claims for damage relating to potholes and pavement defects. A total of £337.38 has been paid to date for this period. There are currently 27 open claims.”

Question

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

"Last year the Scottish Government decided to reduce North Ayrshire’s Attainment Challenge funding by £4.4m, with the funding reducing by £1.1m each year. Can the Cabinet Member tell me what impact the £1.1m cut in 2023/24 will have on staff levels, including both teaching and non-teaching staff, and what service changes will come as a result of the cut?"

Response

“A reduction of £4.4m over the next four years has initiated a formal review of the Scottish Attainment Challenge fund in North Ayrshire, and this is considering the impact on all current workstream areas, including staffing implications.

The Education Service held the first of a series of full-day collaborative improvement events in early May 2022, bringing together all Head Teachers, Attainment Challenge leads and senior officers to commence discussions on the future strategic direction and plans for years 2023-26.

Proposals for prioritisation of areas for future spend have been developed through these collaborative sessions. Draft plans for session 2023-24 have been drawn up and include: a review of the Professional Learning Academy and Nurture delivery models; a review of project governance and leadership arrangements; and adjustments to non-staffing budgets.

Contd.

Discussions are ongoing with Scottish Government in respect of teacher numbers and support staff hours for next year which will further inform the implementation stage of this work.”

Question

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

“Is the Member for Place happy with North Ayrshire Council’s process for dealing with claims related to damaged vehicles as a result of Roads Faults?”

Response

Councillor Gurney will respond.

Question

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

“To ask the Leader of the Council if they like me are concerned about recent reports involving female students at Kilwinning College having to remove their clothes in front of a recently convicted rapist and sex offender?”

Response

The Leader will respond.

Question

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

“Given the news that the Scottish Government have clawed back over £8 million from the reserves of the HSCP, does the Cabinet Member believe this will have a positive or negative impact on the HSCP meeting its strategic priorities?”

Response

“The funding which has been clawed back by the Scottish Government from IJB reserves was specifically associated with responding to the Covid pandemic. The IJB carried forward £13.3m of Covid related funding into 2022-23.

The Scottish Government has retained this funding in the health and social care system. Health Boards locally and nationally also continue to incur additional costs as a result of /the pandemic in services which are not delegated to IJBs and did not initially receive any additional funding to meet these costs in 2022-23. The Covid funding which has been reclaimed from IJBs has been redistributed to Health Boards across Scotland, including NHS Ayrshire and Arran, to meet these additional costs.

This recovery will have no impact on the delivery of the HSCPs strategic priorities, as the funds were not associated with core service delivery and were earmarked for a specific purpose for which they are no longer required and could not be used for any other purpose.”

Question

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

“How many members of staff employed by the Council have in their job description any of the following descriptors (or equivalent synonyms) of “Diversity, Inclusion, or Equality” and what is their total salaries?”

Response

“North Ayrshire Council has 24.5 employees whose job titles refer to “diversity, inclusion or equality”. The total salaries in relation to these employees equates to £885,855.

All employees are bound by North Ayrshire Council’s Code of Conduct which outlines the expectations that employees should respect each other, their beliefs and opinions, behaving in an appropriate manner and in accordance with the Council’s policy on Equalities. This ensures that all employees work in an environment that is free from discrimination, victimisation, intimidation, bullying or harassment.”

Question

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

“Does the Leader of the Council believe that if some families or individuals living in North Ayrshire had to fork out at least an extra £28 every month on Council charges would this increase or decrease poverty levels in North Ayrshire?”

Response

The Leader will respond.

Question

(11) a question by Councillor McLean to the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care in the following terms:

“Can the Member please advise if North Ayrshire Council has ever or continues to (i) provide referrals or signpost young people to LGBT Youth Scotland? (ii) provide any funding to this organisation?”

Response

“Youth Services are currently working with LGBT Youth Scotland to achieve their Youth Silver Charter Mark. The set fee for the support, training and the charter is £2,100. Individual schools are in the process of achieving charter marks in conjunction with LGBT Youth Scotland.

We signpost young people through social media and our LGBT support groups.”

Question

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

“Can the Cabinet Member for Education tell us how many North Ayrshire pupils have visited Arran Outdoor Education Centre as part of a school residential since the centre reopened following Covid restrictions?”

Response

“The centre returned to normal operations at the start of the 2022/23 academic year. 1,424 pupils from North Ayrshire have attended since then, accompanied by 120 teachers.

A further 549 visitors from outwith the area or non-school groups have also attended.”

Question

(13) a question by Councillor T. Ferguson to the Cabinet Member for Education in the following terms:

"To ask the Cabinet Member for Education to provide an update on the use of Facial Recognition Technology in schools following the recently published report from the Information Commissioner's Office."

Response

"The facial recognition system was discontinued in October 2021 and all data held was deleted. There is no intention to reinstate this part of the system."

Question

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

"Anti-poverty charities such as Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) have been campaigning to reduce the Cost of the School Day, pointing out that the costs associated with sending children to school are a financial barrier to a good education for many families and their children. The last Administration introduced North Ayrshire's Cost of the School Day policy, with £500,000 of recurring annual funding, which was warmly welcomed by those anti-poverty charities. Can the Cabinet Member tell us how, to date, the funding has been used?"

Response

"In **2021/22** half of the fund was spent on providing ICT devices for pupils. The balance of the expenditure was focused on the key themes identified through a process of consultation and engagement with young people, including the CoSD conference. These were:

- Access to Food
- Activities/ Excursions and Trips
- Transport
- Uniforms

Schools were allocated funding for clothing and COSD activities which were determined locally. This included seasonal activities and trips and vouchers to support families at Christmas.

Facilities Management provided reusable water bottles to avoid expenditure on single plastics to reduce weekly costs to families.

Funding allocations were made to community partners to increase their offer to children and families, which included breakfast club support, family cooking sessions and free access to larders for families with school aged children.

Contd.

In 2022/23, the themes have remained consistent, with schools again being allocated funding to support locally identified priorities.

Again, the largest investment has been in the continuation of a programme of purchasing IT devices for children and young people.

School clothing, uniforms and equipment has this year been identified as the most valued area of spend across school communities. The Council is currently completing a procurement process to ensure best value is achieved through the spend.

The 'Winter Warmer Breakfast' was also funded from the CoSD funds and was introduced across secondary schools, beginning in winter 2022.

Arrangements are being made to carry forward remaining unspent balances to be able to achieve best value from the funding across the school session, and this will be ring-fenced and spent before the end of this current academic session."

Question

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

"How much has North Ayrshire Council paid to Calmac in 2022 for following ferry travel to and from Arran and Cumbrae:

- Staff employed by North Ayrshire Council
- Staff employed by the Health and Social Care Partnership
- Waste vehicles
- Other vehicles"

Response

"In 2022, payments to Calmac processed through North Ayrshire Council's purchase ledger totalled £326,838. On some occasions, staff travel on the ferry services will not be included in these totals where they are recovered via staff expenses. This information cannot easily be extrapolated from the information held."

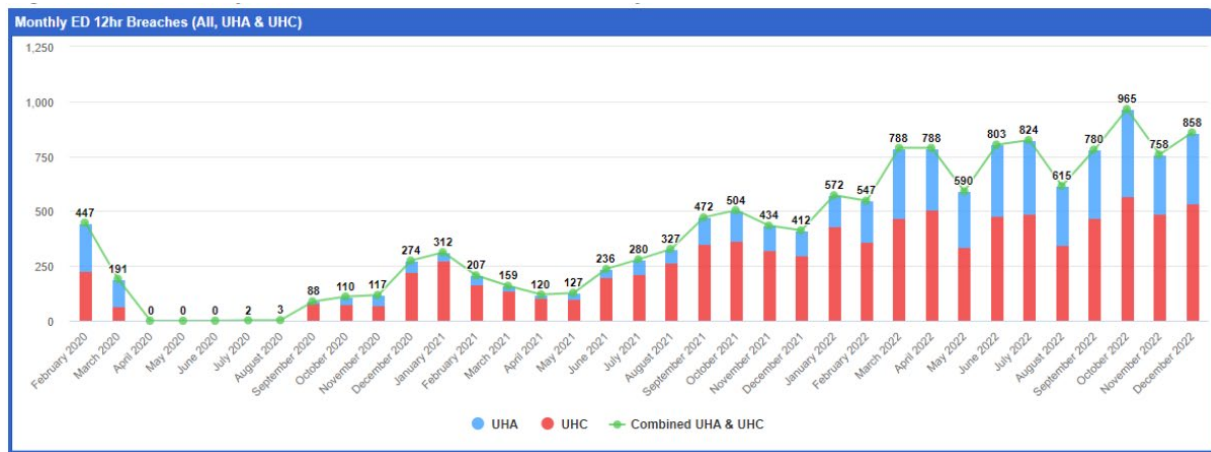
Question

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

“To ask the Leader of the Council in her role as our representative on the NHS Ayrshire and Arran board how many patients in the health board waiting more than 12 hours in A&E in the past year?”

Response

“NHS Ayrshire and Arran Health Board consider regular performance reports which are publicly available and published on their website. The most recent report which was considered by the Health Board on 31 January 2023 details the performance against key indicators for the year to December 2022, this includes the monthly Emergency Department waits over 12 hours across both acute hospital sites since February 2020. An extract of the performance information and trend is included in my written response for ease of access for members:



The performance report details that in the last year, ie from January to December 2022 there have been 8,888 waits of more than 12 hours in EDs in Ayrshire and Arran.”

Question

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

“A leading Scottish athletic champion has spoken out about Scottish government regulations which permit children to enter competitions in which gender they identify with.

She said at a school athletic championship in 2022 pupils there was a boy who identified as a trans girl.

The advice given by local council's active schools team was that children can compete in the gender they identify on the day.

The trans girl entered the girls' events and won all her events.

What advice does North Ayrshire Active Schools Team give in such a situation?”

Response

“The “Supporting Transgender Pupils in Schools Guidance” says:

“We recommend:

“If PE classes are organised by sex, a transgender young person should be allowed to take part within the group which matches their gender identity.”

The North Ayrshire Active Schools Team follows the national guidance.”

Question

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

“How many new contracts has North Ayrshire Council set up with companies and individuals based in North Ayrshire that can be directly accredited to the Community Wealth Building initiative set up in 2020?”

Response

“Procurement contracts since 2020 to December 2022 awarded to local companies, which include tender awards, quick quotes and direct contract awards, totalled 291 contracts with a total value of £31,316,759. In terms of the total value of procurement spend with local companies and suppliers, this has increased from £43.243million (19.96% of total spend) in 2019/20 to £51.220million (22.93% of total spend) in 2021/22.”

Question

(19) a question by Councillor Billings to the Cabinet Member for Economy and Climate Change in the following terms:

“How many new jobs have been created within North Ayrshire that can be directly accredited to the Community Wealth Building initiative set up in 2020?”

Response

“It is not possible to directly accredit the creation of a specific new job with any one specific intervention or initiative as there are a number of factors that contribute to the creation of new jobs.”