

North Ayrshire Council
22 March 2017

IRVINE, 22 March 2017 - At a Meeting of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Ian Clarkson, Robert Barr, John Bell, Matthew Brown, John Bruce, Marie Burns, Joe Cullinane, John Easdale, John Ferguson, Alex Gallagher, Willie Gibson, Tony Gurney, Jean Highgate, Alan Hill, John Hunter, Tom Marshall, Elizabeth McLardy, Grace McLean, Catherine McMillan, Peter McNamara, Ronnie McNicol, Louise McPhater, Jim Montgomerie, Alan Munro, David O'Neill, Donald Reid, Robert Steel and Joan Sturgeon.

In Attendance

E. Murray, Chief Executive; L. Friel, Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Support); C. Hatton, Executive Director (Place); Iona Colvin, Director (Health and Social Care Partnership); J. Butcher, Executive Director (Education and Youth Employment); K. Yeomans, Executive Director (Economy and Communities); and A. Fraser, Head of Democratic Services, C. Andrew, 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.

Apologies for Absence

Anthea Dickson and Irene Oldfather.

1. Apologies

The Provost invited intimation of apologies for absence, which were recorded.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest in terms of Standing Order 10 and Section 5 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

There were no declarations of the Party Whip.

3. Previous Minutes

The accuracy of the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 21 December 2016, the Special Meeting held on 17 January 2017 and the Special Meeting held on 1 March 2017 was confirmed and the Minutes signed in accordance with Paragraph 7 (1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

Noted.

4. Provost's Report

The Provost reported on the following matters:-

- attendance at the topping-out ceremony on 12 January 2017 to mark the installation of the final piece of structure at the new £1.8 million Fullarton Community Hub;
- the official opening of the Montgomery Court development in Kilbirnie, which provides housing specifically tailored to meet the needs of the older population in North Ayrshire;
- attendance at a number of community Christmas dinners, events to mark Burns Day and, together with the Depute Provost, an event to mark the Chinese New Year;
- visits to a number of groups and organisations, including the Loudoun-Montgomery Breakfast Club, Beith Primary School Breakfast Club with Netball by our Active Schools programme, the Garnock Community Campus After Schools programme and North Ayrshire Table Tennis Club;
- attendance at the Young Musician and Singer of the Year Competition and the Young Traditional Musician of the Year Competition in the Garnock Campus, and the Depute Provost's attendance at the Flagship Concert, which featured exceptional performances by young people;
- a ground-breaking ceremony at Quarry Road in Irvine on 17 February 2017;
- attendance as a top table guest at Seagate Rotary's Annual Sportsmen's dinner;
- visits to Mr and Mrs Parker from Dreghorn on their 65th wedding anniversary, Mr and Mrs Blackley and Mr and Mrs Sommerville at Buckreddan Care Centre on their Diamond wedding anniversaries,
- a visit by the Depute Provost to Mrs Nettlefold from Ardrossan on her 100th birthday;
- the official launch of the Veteran's First Point Ayrshire and Arran in the Bridgegate, Irvine, on 9 March 2017, which was attended by the Lord Lieutenant, Veteran's Champions from East and South Ayrshire and representatives from the armed forces community;
- a number of Citizenship Ceremonies which took place in Saltcoats Town Hall in recent months;
- the Provost's Civic Pride Awards on 10 March 2017, celebrating the outstanding talent and generous community spirit which exists throughout North Ayrshire and which raised £17,000 for the Ayrshire Hospice and Cash for Kids;
- the Provost's thanks to the officers and Members who have assisted him in his role; and
- an invitation for Members to join the Provost for some refreshments to mark the last Council meeting of this Administration.

5. Leader's Report

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

- the "Topping Out" ceremony at the Fullarton Hub on 12 January 2017, which was attended with the Provost and local Members;
- the MS Resource Centre in Kilwinning which will, unfortunately close, due to the charity's wider policy of not renewing leases;
- Unison's Ethical Care Charter, which was officially signed by North Ayrshire Council and the Health and Social Care Partnership on 19 January 2017;
- the COSLA Leaders' meeting on 27 January 2017, which provided an opportunity to hear more about the Local Government Settlement for 2017/18, Brexit and the COSLA pay proposal;
- attendance at the Highlands and Islands Leaders' meeting on 1 February 2017, which included a meeting with Keith Brown, Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work on the future of the Highlands and Islands Enterprise board;
- the Care Leaders Covenant and Charter, which was signed by the North Ayrshire Council, together with Community Planning Partners, on 9 February 2017;
- a meeting with Maureen Watt, Minister for Mental Health, which took place on 22 February 2017 and which was requested by the Leader following a passionate presentation by Courtney Gemmell MSYP on her work with young people on Mental Health;
- attendance at a further COSLA Leaders' meeting, held on 24 February 2017;
- a visit to Beith Community Development Trust on 27 February 2017 to find out more about the trust's projects, including the purchase of the former school estate at Geilsland;
- the Business Enterprise open morning held on the 28 February 2017 in Bridgegate, which provided the opportunity to update key business partners on the progress of the Ayrshire Growth Deal and some of the other collaborative work in which the Council is currently involved;
- a visit to "FITBA4 U", a project run by Onside Ayrshire, which is helping to develop many young adults who have experienced problems such as alcohol/drug misuse, mental/physical health issues or homelessness;
- the setting of the Council's budget on 1 March 2017;
- visits on 3 March 2017 to Winton Primary School Breakfast Club and the charity INPUT, which is based at the Focus Centre in Saltcoats;
- an invitation by the "Giving Something Back" group to speak about the Council's Financial Inclusion Programme at the BIG IRVINE LUNCH in Fullarton Connexions on 3 March 2017;
- a meeting between the three Ayrshire Leaders and Keith Brown MSP held on 8 March 2017 to discuss progress in respect of the Ayrshire Growth Deal;

- attendance at a meeting with officials from Calmac on 10 March 2017 to discuss a number of issues, including ferry cancellations, plans for the new ferry in 2018 and the Review being conducted by Transport Scotland on the Ardrossan versus Troon;
- a visit on 10 March 2017 to the new premises of the independent business Rare Trade, which specialises in the sale of new, old and vintage vinyls and is an example of the work and support provided to small local businesses by Team North Ayrshire;
- a visit to Ayrshire Healthy Enterprise and Irvine Beat FM on 10 March 2017;
- the MSYP election results on 17 March 2017;
- receipt of the STAG report on the Arran ferry and the revised timescale of early April 2017 for a final decision on the future of the service; and
- the Leader's appreciation of the work of fellow Elected Members in serving their constituents over many years and his best wishes for the future to those not standing for re-election at the forthcoming local government elections.

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 8 December 2016 to 15 March 2017, and the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 20 March 2017.

7. Questions

In terms of Standing Order No. 12 submitted:-

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

"At the budget meeting of North Ayrshire Council on 1 March, it was agreed by the Labour and SNP groups to allocate funding of 3.162 million pounds to a Community Investment Fund. Will the Leader of the Council inform the elected members how he intends to disburse the Funds to the six Locality Planning Partnerships (i.e. will the fund be disbursed equally between the six partnerships, will it be allocated per head of population or will it be disbursed by other means)?"

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

"Full detail of the governance, criteria for investment, basis of allocation across each of the Localities and the way in which the Community Investment Fund will operate are being developed currently. This will be the subject of a future Cabinet report."

As a supplementary question, Councillor McNicol made reference to advice provided by the Chief Executive at the Special Meeting of the Council on 1 March that no robust review or appraisal had been carried out in respect of the Community Investment Fund proposal, and asked what governance and monitoring arrangements would be put in place with regard to the Fund.

Councillor Cullinane responded by giving examples of some of the Community Improvement Fund models which had been considered and discussed with officers prior to the budget meeting and expressing the view that suitable governance and monitoring arrangements, which would be the subject of a report to Cabinet, would allow for an equitable share of the Fund to help every community.

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

"In November, 2016 North Ayrshire Council Planning Department won the Scottish Government's 'Scottish Award for Quality in Planning' for the redevelopment of Saltcoats Town Hall. In March of this year North Ayrshire Council's Planning Department was shortlisted by the Royal Town Planning Institute for the same redevelopment as a finalist in the 'UK Award for Planning Excellence 2017'.

Will the Leader of the Council join with me and congratulate our Planning Department on winning such a prestigious Award and wish them success at the UK finals in June?"

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

"Yes, I would like to pass on my congratulations to the Planning Service on their award and wish them luck in June. We have one of the best performing Planning Services in the country and our congratulations should go to them."

As a supplementary question, Councillor McNicol made reference to the background to the refurbishment of Saltcoats Town Hall, commending the Planning Service for their work on this and other projects, and asked whether the Leader, if re-elected, would ensure that adequate funding was available to retain such important historic buildings across North Ayrshire.

Councillor Cullinane responded by acknowledging the efforts of a number of Members who had sought to safeguard the future of Saltcoats Town Hall and by agreeing on the need to invest in historic buildings.

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

"Given the conflicting numbers presented in the local media for the HSCP Challenge Fund that received approval at the budget meeting of Council on 1/3/17. Can the Leader clarify the total sum in the Fund and how it is being funded?"

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

"The total value of the Challenge Fund for the HSCP is just over £4m. The confusion has arisen because some may not have read the notes which accompanied the budget proposal - it is funded through two different lines in the budget. The officer proposal to Council on 1 March 2017 would have resulted in a net additional investment of £1.5m. The Labour Administration proposed a total investment of more than £5.5m, with £2.570m of this being funded from unearmarked reserves and the balance from the second tranche of 2017/18 grant funding."

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

"Given the conflicting numbers presented in the local media for the Community Investment Fund that was approved at the budget meeting of the Council on 1/3/17. Can the Leader clarify the total sum in the Fund and how it is being funded?"

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

"The CIF is part of the £12.3m investment programme approved by Council on 1 March 2017. The total value of the CIF is £3.162m, with £1m funded from the 2016/17 projected revenue underspend and £2.162m from the capital underspend from Tarryholme."

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

"Now that the realigning of the B714 has been withdrawn, can the portfolio holder advise on where the budget, originally set aside for the project, has been allocated to?"

Councillor Montgomerie thanked the Depute Provost for his question responded in the following terms:-

"The B714 realignment has not been withdrawn from the capital programme. An original budget of £2.065m was allocated to the project, some of which has been used in 2016/17 to develop the project. There remains £1.284m in 2021/22 in the current capital investment programme but the estimated cost of the project has increased by an additional £2.1m. This additional capital funding will be required to allow the project to proceed to tender."

8. North Ayrshire Ventures Trust

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the appointment of two new co-opted Directors on the Board of North Ayrshire Ventures Trust.

The Council agreed to approve the appointment of Alan Macdonald and Maggie Broadley to the Board of North Ayrshire Ventures Trust.

9. Motion

(a) a Motion by the Leader of the Council, seconded by Councillor Gallagher in the following terms:-

"Communities throughout North Ayrshire have been let down by our rigged bus system that allows private bus companies to withdraw or cut local bus services with little notice. This Council believes it is time to put the interests of communities before bus company profits and therefore asks officers to prepare a report on options for the Council to run local bus services, including the option of establishing a municipal bus company to do so, and bring that report to a future meeting of North Ayrshire Council.

As an amendment, Councillor Gurney, seconded by Councillor McLean, moved as follows:-

"That Communities throughout North Ayrshire have been let down by the 1985 privatisation of bus services initiated by a Tory Westminster government and the failure of successive Labour Westminster governments to reverse this pernicious legislation. With the SNP Scottish Government, represented by Transport Minister Humza Yousaf, having proposed legislation for the provision of municipal bus companies, this Council believes it is time to put the interests of communities before bus company profits and instructs officers to prepare a report on franchising bid options for Council to run local bus services, including the option of establishing a municipal bus company, for presentation to a future cabinet meeting."

Members then asked questions of the movers of the motion and the amendment and, thereafter, debated the matter.

The movers of the motion and amendment then summed up.

On a division, there voted for the amendment 10 and for the motion 15, and the motion was declared carried, Councillor Marshall dissenting.

10. Provost's Closing Remarks

The Provost, noting that this was the last meeting of the Council in the current administration, acknowledged and thanked all Elected Members and Officers for their contribution to the work of the Council and allowed a number of valedictory remarks to be made, as follows:-

- Councillor Gibson intimated that he had enjoyed his time as an Elected Member as a former Leader of the Council and praised the Council's Chief Officers and staff for their work.
- Councillor Barr referred to the enjoyment he had derived from his role as Depute Provost, wished Members not standing for re-election well for the future, and expressed his hope that the new administration would work for the benefit of all of North Ayrshire;
- Councillor McNamara praised the work of officers at all levels within the Council, remembered those Members who had served in previous administrations, and expressed his hope that Locality Partnerships would move from strength to strength;
- Councillor Sturgeon thanked Members and officers for their support over the past 10 years and, in particular, during her four and a half years as Provost;
- Councillor Steel thanked officers, staff and the Depute Provost for their support and looked forward to the Council continuing its journey from 'good', to 'great' and, hopefully, to 'excellent';
- Councillor O'Neill made reference to a number of long-standing Members of the Council, some of whom were not standing for re-election, paying tribute in particular to Councillors McNamara, Munro, Highgate, Gibson, Sturgeon and Brown;
- Councillor Bruce praised officers, particularly Member Services, for their support and assistance and expressed the hope that Arran would continue to have an important place in North Ayrshire; and
- Councillor Burns thanked retiring Councillors Ferguson and McMillan for their tireless work.

The meeting ended at 3.20 p.m.