



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

LEADER'S REPORT

For the period covering: 23 October – 3
December 2023

The attached report gives a summary and brief details to Council, of meetings and events attended by the Leader of North Ayrshire Council, Councillor Marie Burns.

LEADER'S REPORT



LEADER'S REPORT

For the period covering: 23 October – 3 December 2023

COSLA LEADERS', 27 October

On 27 October, I attended a meeting of COSLA Leaders' to discuss the following Agenda items:

- Housing Situation Progress Report
- National Trauma Training Programme
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy: Delivery Plan and Workforce Action Plan
- Pay update
- Local Government Finance Update
- Council Tax Second Home and Empty Home Consultation Analysis/Premium
- Flood Risk Management Programme Affordability
- National Care Service
- Settlement and Distribution
- Proposals to Freeze Council Tax

The Housing Report provided Leaders with an update on Scotland's housing situation and outlined the proposal for COSLA to continue working with Scottish Government officials to ensure that the recommendations outlined in the Solace Housing Report previously presented to COSLA Leaders are taken forward, with appropriate governance arrangements in place to ensure a proactive approach on policy reform and investment prioritisation. It also seeks approval of the establishment a Special Interest Group (SIG) for Housing comprising elected members, the Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO) and other local authority professionals.

IRVINE SENIORS FORUM INFORMATION DAY, 30 October

I was invited along to the Irvine Volunteer Rooms on 30 October to open the Irvine Seniors Forum Information Day. The annual event is useful in providing information on a range of subjects to the senior group, including stalls providing financial help and advice (North Ayrshire Council's Money Matters Team) as well as serving a light lunch and providing some entertainment.

LEADER'S REPORT



IRVINE LOCALITY VISIT, 30 October

Later on 30 October, together with North Ayrshire Council Chief Executive, Craig Hatton, I took part in the third locality visit, this time to Irvine, where I was able to meet some of our staff in their place of work. The first stop was a visit to Bridgegate Customer Service Centre to meet the different teams and find out more about their roles. The teams help residents with enquiries on a variety of matters, including benefits, Council Tax, the registration of births, deaths, marriages and Housing related issues.

The second stop was a visit to Trindlemoss Day Opportunities Centre to visit the team there and to find out more about the services and activities available. The Centre which is run by North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) offers the chance for people with learning disabilities to take part in a wide range of inclusive and enabling activities in the heart of the community.

The afternoon was finished with a visit to Trinity Church and to meet with a creative writing group which is run by the Council's Employability Team. Members of the group who all live with autism, dyspraxia and dyslexia work together to boost their confidence and improve their communication skills. The group are currently working on their fifth short story together.

My thanks again to all involved for facilitating these visits and can I just say how great it is to see how far reaching the Council's work is and how it helps so many people in our community.

EMPLOYABILITY AWARDS, 2 November

On 2 November, I attended North Ayrshire Council's first ever Employability Awards held at Saltcoats Town Hall. The Awards celebrate the success of the participants of the Council's employability programmes such as "We Work for Families". North Ayrshire Council's "Your Next Move Working North Ayrshire" Employability service work with various delivery partners, to help boost confidence and support people looking to get their first job or returning to work after a period of absence.

The work carried out by partners and the Employability service is first-class and as Chair of the North Ayrshire Tackling Child Poverty Board, I have seen first-hand the positive impact this work is having on the lives of so many individuals.

Congratulations to all the finalists, winner and to the Team and Partners for their great work.

COSLA SPECIAL LEADERS, 3 November

LEADER'S REPORT



On 3 November, I attended a special meeting of COSLA Leaders to discuss the ongoing Local Government Pay dispute. COSLA will continue to work with unions to resolve this as quickly as possible.

NHS HEALTHCARE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING, 6 November

On 6 November, I attended an NHS Healthcare and Governance Committee meeting where attendees received updates on various Patient Safety Reports. There was also an update on The Ayrshire Mental Health Conversation (AMCH)/Mental Health following publication of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Core Mental Health Standards report.

Attendees also discussed the Winter Vaccinations programme for 2023/24.

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENTARY LOCAL GOVERNMENT, HOUSING AND PLANNING COMMITTEE VISIT TO ISLE OF CUMBRAE, 6 November

Later on 6 November, I attended a working lunch at Garrison House on the Isle of Cumbrae. The lunch was arranged as part of a Scottish Parliamentary Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee visit to see key examples of Community Wealth Building in North Ayrshire which will assist with the development and scrutiny of the Community Wealth Building Bill.

The lunch provided the opportunity for the Committee to discuss general issues facing Councils, with a focus on the Verity House Agreement/New Deal for Local Government and the Visitor Levy Bill.

JOINT YOUTH CABINET, 7 November

On 7 November, I was delighted to take part in the Joint Youth Cabinet held at Saltcoats Town Hall. Together with Cabinet members, our Youth Champion and senior officers from North Ayrshire Council, we were able to engage with young people from various localities in North Ayrshire.

The event, which was held during National Youth Work Week, also highlighted some of the great examples of youth work taking place throughout North Ayrshire including our youth forums, groups involved in important current issues such as climate change, tackling poverty and improving mental health. I am immensely proud of the work our youth groups are involved in and would like to congratulate them on their work and for their interest in their local communities.

LEADER'S REPORT



I would also like to thank two of the Members of Scottish Youth Parliament who were in attendance, Mais Al Diri and Pyper Logan and to thank all four of our Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament for their work over the past few years.

TACKLING CHILD POVERTY & COST OF LIVING IN NORTH AYRSHIRE BOARD, 8 November

On 8 November, I chaired a meeting of the Tackling Child Poverty and Cost of Living in North Ayrshire Board. The Board discussed the latest Cost of Living report which was brought to North Ayrshire Council Cabinet in November 2023 which provided an update on the measures being taken to support our communities struggling with the cost-of-living.

Themes which have been explored so far as part of the Board's work include:

- No Wrong Door
- Employability
- Food
- Childcare

In addition, two place-based mini-enquiries have been concluded on Arran Cumbrae to align with the Scottish Government Island Cost of Crisis Emergency Fund.

The outputs from this work have informed the three-year Child poverty strategy and annual report which was reported to North Ayrshire Council Cabinet in June. The work will continue to contribute to the work being done to combat the cost-of-living crisis.

My thanks again to the Board for their continued work and support.

I3 FLEXIBLE OFFICE SPACE GROUNDBREAKING, 9 November

On 9 November, I was invited to the groundbreaking ceremony of the i3 flexible office space here at Irvine's major business park. The space will enable the construction of an 18,000 square feet industrial unit and related yard space. The work will be delivered by Muir Construction Ltd and is scheduled for completion by August 2024

This will be the first phase of the i3 Advanced Manufacturing Flexible Space Programme that's being supported by £15m of funding through the Ayrshire Growth Deal with £11m from the Scottish Government and £4m from North Ayrshire Council.

LEADER'S REPORT



The project seeks to provide flexible modern business space for local companies looking to expand and grow or for inward investment opportunities and will complement the Council's other Ayrshire Growth Deal project at i3 – the Digital Process Manufacturing Centre (DPMC) in partnership with the National Manufacturing Institute Scotland (NMIS) and the Centre for Process Innovation (CPI).

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING EXPERT PANEL MEETING, 10 November

On 10 November, I attended a meeting of the Community Wealth Building (CWB) Expert Panel. The Panel was asked to consider our CWB Strategy refresh (2024 – 2027). Since the launch of our first CWB Strategy back in May 2020, a lot has changed including the effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic, soaring fuel and food costs resulting in a cost-of-living crisis and escalating inflation. National interest in CWB has increased significantly, with CWB referenced within the National Strategy for Economic Transformation and a consultation on Building Community Wealth in Scotland in 2023.

North Ayrshire Council remains committed and continues to aspire to the vision of a Wellbeing Economy; an economy which works for both people and the planet, providing an economically and environmentally sustainable future for our communities and young people to flourish.

My thanks to Sarah Deas, Chair of the CWB Expert Panel and to all the Panel members for their continued support as we continue on our CWB journey.

MEETING WITH CORRA FOUNDATION, 13 November

On 13 November, I had an introductory meeting with the CORRA Foundation. CORRA deliver some excellent work with our communities helping to deliver positive change. It works to encourage opportunity, fairness and growth of aspirations to improve the quality of life. CORRA achieves this through grantmaking and its place-based programme of which Getting Alongside Communities is a key part.

GREENWOOD ACADEMY SCHOOL SHOW, 15 November

I was delighted to go along to Greenwood Academy on 15 November to see a wonderful school performance of "Sister Act". The performances were outstanding as was the music and singing. Well done to everyone involved, including those who work behind the scenes ensuring everything goes smoothly.

LEADER'S REPORT

***NHS AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING, 16 November***

On 16 November, I attended a meeting of the NHS Ayrshire and Arran Audit and Risk Committee meeting. Attendees received and discussed Integration Joint Board Internal Audit Reports and Plans from North, South and East Ayrshire Councils. The Committee also received a progress update on the vaccination programme and an update report on Infection Prevention and Control. There were also update reports on Counter Fraud and a Fraud Standard Self-Assessment and Action Plan.

AYRSHIRE ECONOMIC JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING, 20 November

On 20 November, I chaired a meeting of the Ayrshire Economic Joint Committee (AEJC). Committee members received a report on the Ayrshire Growth Deal (AGD) Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23 and an AGD Internal Audit Plan for 2023/24.

Attendees also received an update report on the development of AGD projects (as of the end of October 2023) and how each of these were progressing. At the programme level the initial outcomes from the October discussions have identified the potential for the Programme to undergo a Review with a focus upon the key capital projects which are likely to experience significant change. A Checkpoint Review process will be developed and agreed with partners and governments to examine both the Growth Deal programme and component projects at key decision points in their lifecycle. The approach and timing of the Programme Review is yet to be finalised.

AYRSHIRE SKILLS INVESTMENT FUND, 20 November

On 20 November, I attended an Ayrshire Economic Joint Committee Sub Committee of the Ayrshire Skills Investment Fund (ASIF). The ASIF Employer Grants Programme funding is aimed at helping employers grow and to develop their employees and increase skills for Ayrshire residents. The fund will support skills development in Engineering, Digital, Clean Growth and the Visitor Economy.

GARNOCK VALLEY LOCALITY VISIT, 21 November

On 21 November, together with North Ayrshire Council Chief Executive, Craig Hatton, I took part in the fourth locality visit, this time to the Garnock Valleys. As with previous visits, the aim was to meet with some of our staff and community groups and hear more about the work they are involved in.

LEADER'S REPORT



The first visit was to the new flood storage dam being constructed as part of the Upper Garnock Valley Scheme and which recently, following a public vote, is to be named 'Robin Dam'. The Robin is the name of the pool where generations of local people have met and is synonymous with swimming, fishing and walks up the river.

The new dam will retain water during periods of peak flow to reduce flood risk downstream whilst leaving river flow unaffected at other times. The dam, combined with flood defence walls and embankments, will increase flood protection for the community after suffering from a history of flooding.

Next stop was the Garnock Valley Men's Shed, who, following a community asset transfer, have taken over a 25-year lease of a former Council Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance Depot in Kilbirnie Public Park. The group also received Council funding in 2018 for renovations to the building. The group offer skills such as machine and lathe training, scale model building, music groups, woodwork initiatives and bespoke community projects.

The last visit was to the multi-million pound development at Lochshore Park in Kilbirnie to meet with the team involved in planning and developing projects and also some of the partners. As part of North Ayrshire Council's tree planting strategy - which is looking to plant 108,000 trees - Lochshore will see around 2400 trees planted in the community area.

In addition, there is the Lochshore Park Hub – which is available “to let” to members of the public and community groups for meetings, training, workshops and small events.

Once again, my thanks again to all involved for facilitating these visits and for giving an insight into some of their work.

OLDER PEOPLE'S CONFERENCE, 22 November

I was delighted to attend the Older People's Conference in my capacity as North Ayrshire Council Older People's Champion having taken up the role a few months ago. The Conference, which was held at Saltcoats Town Hall, was well attended by various senior community groups and provided a platform to deliver useful and practical information through a range of fantastic speakers. Attendees were also invited to take part in various interactive sessions in an effort to create an engagement and participation structure for our older people.

Thank you to all those who attended and I look forward to working with many of you in the future, to ensure that our older people's needs are considered in the planning and delivery of policies and services.

LEADER'S REPORT

***MEETING WITH SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, 22 November***

On 22 November, together with North Ayrshire Council's Cabinet Member for Communities, Alan Hill and North Ayrshire Council's Chief Executive, Craig Hatton, I attended a meeting with Fiona Hyslop, Scottish Government Minister for Transport. This follows the announcement in the Scottish Parliament on 16 November, regarding the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services contract. The meeting was also attended by other Local Authorities who are served by ferry services.

Stakeholders will have an opportunity to contribute their views to the development of the new contract as Transport Scotland officials will, over the coming months, be holding a series of stakeholder events starting on the 20 November, followed by the launch of a formal public consultation in December.

1ST TIER JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE & CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY GROUP MEETING, 23 November

On 23 November, I chaired a meeting of the 1st Tier Joint Consultative Committee and the Corporate Health and Safety Group. Attendees received Health and Safety reports from various Directorates.

There was also an update on the progress of the LiveWell – Healthy Working Lives Programme, which is split into five key themes: PlayWell, BeWell, WorkWell, EatWell and SaveWell. Future activities planned include badminton sessions at the Portal and Largs Campus, football at the Circuit, wellbeing webinars on mental health, positive mindset, menopause, lifestyle factors and musculoskeletal health, Grief and Loss.

COSLA LEADERS', 24 November

COSLA Leaders' met again on 24 November to discuss a packed agenda including the following items:

- 16 Days Presidential Statement
- Business Gateway National Service Specification
- COSLA Governance Meetings 2024
- Verity House Agreement Update
- Local Government Finance
- Equally Safe Refreshed Strategy

LEADER'S REPORT



- Education Reform
- National Performance Framework
- National Care Service

The Presidential Opening Statement will mark COSLA'S participation in the United Nations International 16 Days of Action Against Gender Based Violence Campaign 2023. North Ayrshire Council will be supporting the Campaign and there are a number of events planned to include pledge signing by various partners and the Reclaim the Night Walk which will take place on 5 December.

ARRAN VISIT, 27 November

On 27 November, together with North Ayrshire Council Depute Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Shaun Macaulay, I spent the day on Arran. It was a useful and informative day with visits to Arran High School, Arran Outdoor Education Centre and a meeting with Alastair Dobson, Chief Executive at "A Taste of Arran". My thanks again to all those involved for facilitating the visits and for giving up some of their time to meet with us.

MEETING WITH SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CABINET SECRETARY, NEIL GRAY, 29 November

On 29 November, together with North Ayrshire Council Chief Executive, Craig Hatton, North Ayrshire Council Executive Director, Russell McCutcheon and representatives from the Arran Business and Economy Group, I attended a meeting with the Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy, Neil Gray MSP. The meeting was following a request to meet to discuss the Arran economy and highlight the increased challenges Arran faces as it recovers from the pandemic, including rising inflation pressures and the cost-of-living and operating on Arran. It is hoped that by exploring fiscal levers and making changes to support and compensate a fragile island economy, that the island economy can recover.

The 2020 Fraser of Allander Institute report on The Impact of Covid-19 on the Arran economy recognised the uniqueness of the island's economy within North Ayrshire and Scotland. Unlike many of the Scottish Islands and much of rural Scotland, Arran has a year-round tourism season which the island economy relies on. Other island economies are less reliant on tourism, as historically they cannot, for various reasons, attract tourists outside the traditional season. Due to the prevalence of the tourism industry, Arran was disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

LEADER'S REPORT



AYRSHIRE SHARED SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING, 1 December

On 1 December, I attended a meeting of the Ayrshire Shared Services Committee where all three Ayrshire Councils received an update on the Ayrshire Civil Contingencies Plan for 2024/25. Attendees were asked to note the plan and agree the proposals put forward.

MEETING WITH PHILIPPA WHITFORD MP, 1 December

Later on 1 December, together with North Ayrshire Council Chief Executive, Craig Hatton, I attended a meeting with Philippa Whitford MP. The meeting provided the platform for discussion around current key areas of interest including:

- Ardrossan Harbour Project
- The Ayrshire Growth Deal – The Great Harbour Project
- Levelling Up
- Active Travel in North Ayrshire
- Housing Updates

FINALLY

On behalf of all the Elected Members, I would like to thank all the staff in North Ayrshire Council for their invaluable work during the year and for their continued support in helping to deliver on a range of Council priorities.

In these challenging times, I hope that everyone can enjoy their Christmas with friends and loved ones.



Marie Burns

LEADER'S REPORT



Councillor Marie Burns
Leader of North Ayrshire Council