



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

Meeting of the Council

Wednesday 13 September 2023

Responses to Questions

Question

- (1) a question by Councillor T. Ferguson to the Cabinet Member for Communities in the following terms:

“To ask the Cabinet Member how much Scottish Government funding was provided for the Summer Holiday Food Programme and the Activities and Childcare Programme budgets for summer 2023 (financial year 2023-2024)?”

Response

“The Scottish Government provided £0.704m funding to the Council for 2023/24 to enable the provision of alternative free school meal provision to all children and young people, eligible for free school meals based on low income, in primary and secondary age groups, during the school holidays. This provision covered the summer holidays; the Christmas and Easter holidays; and the mid-term holidays in October and February.

In addition to this, during 2023-24 the Scottish Government allocated an additional £4m across all local authorities, with North Ayrshire receiving £131,670, to support existing local delivery for summer 2023 programmes.”

Question

- (2) a question by Councillor Foster to the Provost in the following terms:

“I have previously raised concerns about information shared by you through your social media account @Anthea_Dickson which clearly states you are a North Ayrshire Councillor and Provost of North Ayrshire Council. Since I last raised a question regarding you sharing misinformation and offensive comments from this account, you have shared the following:

- Nicola Sturgeon is facing a trial by ‘media s***’.
- The BBC is full blown pro union.
- Scotland produces 300% more renewable energy than our current needs.
- The Scottish Covid enquiry will be politicised.
- BBC Scotland used Covid deaths in care homes to attack the SNP.
- 92% of Scotland’s oil and gas revenues goes to Westminster.
- Scotland should be left to the Scots.
- Nicola Sturgeon’s life will end up in tatters due to ‘a*****’ journalists.
- Scotland has more tidal capacity than the rest of the world combined.
- Humza Yousaf will get arrested and released without charge.
- Scotland sends water to London without compensation.
- Nicola Sturgeon was only arrested due to signing audited accounts.

Contd.

Standards in public life are important. The Council run account @NAC_Provost links to the account @Anthea_Dickson in its bio so that residents who visit that council run page are being directed to your own account that is spreading misinformation and conspiracy theories, including conspiracy theories relating to a live police investigation. Given your civic responsibilities to represent North Ayrshire, your social media is causing our area embarrassment and bringing the Council into disrepute. Will you consider your position and resign as Provost to save North Ayrshire Council any further embarrassment?"

Response

The Provost will respond.

Question

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

"To ask the Cabinet Member for Education how many primary and secondary school children have received a free laptop or tablet as per the SNP election promises made in May 2021?"

Response

"Over the last two financial years, £500k has been invested by North Ayrshire Council through Cost of the School Day funding to purchase devices for learners. These devices are targeted at pupils identified by schools, with devices offered at two stages of a learner's school career (P5 and S2). In the 2021-22 academic year, 1022 devices were allocated with a further 789 devices allocated in the last academic year (2022-23). In addition, a further £170k will be invested in the current financial year through the newly established Child Poverty and Cost of Living fund to continue this scheme to support pupils."

Question

(4) a question by Councillor Kerr to the Cabinet Member for the Green Environment and Economy in the following terms:

"Does the Cabinet Member regret imposing the largest rent increase for over a decade on Council tenants, only for the HRA to report a £6 million + underspend due to his inability to get capital projects off the ground?"

Response

Councillor Gurney will respond.

Question

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

“It is reported that the national gap in attainment of A to C grades between the most deprived fifth of Higher pupils and their least deprived peers has risen to 16% this year up from 14.9% in 2022 but below the last pre pandemic year of 2019 when the gap stood at 16.9%.

What are the equivalent figures for North Ayrshire Council?”

Response

“This information is not published at local level at this time of year. The service has done some initial analysis, based on the available data at this time. Overall, at higher, the pass rate in S5 in North Ayrshire this year was 70.9%. A total of 1363 Higher qualifications were attempted by S5 pupils living in SIMD quintile 1 (the most deprived). Of this number, 905 awards were graded at A-C, giving a pass rate for SIMD quintile 1 of 66.4%. In comparison, 698 Higher qualifications were attempted by S5 pupils living in SIMD quintile 5 (the least deprived). Of this number, 528 awards were graded at A-C, giving a pass rate for SIMD quintile 5 of 75.6%. The gap between the pass rate of the pupils living in the most deprived and least deprived areas of North Ayrshire is therefore 9.2 percentage points in 2023. The same gap in 2022 was 6.4 percentage points, and in 2019, the gap was 18.5 percentage points.”

Question

- (6) a question by Councillor Marshall to the Chair of the Licensing Committee in the following terms:

“It is reported by the Scottish Bed and Breakfast Association that 2/3 of B&Bs are at risk of closure due to all the new licensing rules which come into effect on 1st October. It means that anyone providing even a single room in their home for rent must apply for a short-term licence (STL) showing evidence of the buildings and public liability insurance as well as up-to-date energy performance fire safety, gas and electricity compliance reports.

How many businesses in total North Ayrshire must apply for an STL and of that number how many have been granted a license and how many applications are pending determination?”

Response

“There are 491 businesses registered as self-catering premises and 37 premises registered as Bed and Breakfast establishments for non-domestic rates purposes in North Ayrshire. The Council has received 346 applications for a short-term let licence as at 8 September 2023 and thus far granted and issued 190 licences. 156 applications are pending. There have been no refusals of applications received to date.

Question

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

“To ask the Leader does she agree that the Administration should be open and transparent so that Elected Member’s Questions at full Council are answered in full thus avoiding the necessity of Members resorting to Freedom of Information requests?”

Response

The Leader will respond.

Question

- (8) a question by Councillor Inglis to the Cabinet Member for Green Environment and the Economy in the following terms:

“As part of the budget in March, the Administration announced the pilot of a community transport scheme. Can the Cabinet Member update the Council on the scheme and how successful it has been?”

Response

“At the 30 May Cabinet meeting, the next steps for development of a community transport pathfinder were approved following the budget announcement in March. These were to undertake detailed survey work to understand specific community transport demands so that a pilot scheme can be developed, and also to make Coalfield Community Transport’s ‘Dayhopper’ Service available in North Ayrshire as an initial demand test, with a future report to be brought to Cabinet later in the year outlining further proposals.

Officers have met with several interested community transport stakeholders including Coalfield Community Transport, South Ayrshire Community Transport, Ayrshire CVS and Radio City Association over the summer period to explore different delivery models and are finalising the procurement exercise for the survey work.

Cabinet has agreed to receive a further progress update towards the end of 2023.”

Question

- (9) a question by Councillor S. Ferguson to the Cabinet Member for the Green Environment and Economy in the following terms:

“On the 31st July, 2023 NAC announced that Sanctus LTD had been awarded the £3 million contract to carry out remediation works on the derelict former oil refinery site in Ardrossan, the location for the new community campus.

Regarding the site of the former oil and bitumen refinery in Ardrossan, on which this Council plans to build two schools and a leisure centre, will the Cabinet Member accept that anything less than a guarantee that the site has been 100% cleared of the toxic contaminants we know are in the soil before embarking on building schools and leisure facility?”

Response

“The Council has appointed Sanctus to complete the remediation works on the site prior to development works. The tender exercise to appoint a contractor for remediation works was a competitive public sector tender, ensuring the appointed contractor met the requirements of the Council from a cost and quality perspective.

The tender process was informed and developed with support from Envirocentre, who are a specialist environmental consultancy with extensive experience of the site. Envirocentre has been advising the Council in respect of the tender specification to ensure the works package tendered meets the specification required, which reflects information from various intrusive site surveys and analysis of ground conditions. The remediation works incorporate treatment of soil and groundwater to meet specific target criteria and will meet the highest standard according to UK Government Environmental Guidelines.

This means they will ensure that the land is fit for residential use with gardens – which is the strictest criteria laid out within these guidelines.”

Question

- (10) a question by Councillor McLean to the Cabinet Member for the Green Environment and Economy in the following terms:

“Does the Cabinet Member think North Ayrshire is looking good and well maintained?”

Response

Councillor Gurney will respond.

Question

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

“Is it the opinion of the Cabinet Member that someone who has paid for private healthcare and received a diagnosis should be denied care services from HSCP on the basis of private healthcare diagnosis not factoring in to the normal HSCP clinical pathway or other processes?”

Response

Councillor Johnson will respond.