



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

Meeting of the Council

Wednesday 27 March 2024

Responses to Questions

Question

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

“The total number of Aggression and Violence incidents reported by Communities and Education Directorate for Quarter 3 increased from 270 in 2020 to 410 in 2021 and from 394 in 2022 to 563 in 2023 an increase of over 100% in 4 years.

Why the huge increase and what is being done to protect staff?”

Response

“The vast majority of our learners behave well. It is recognised nationally that there are increases in incidents of violence and aggression within educational settings: this is mostly pupil to pupil. The recent findings from BISSR (Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research 2023) demonstrated that pupil – teacher violence and aggression is experienced more frequently by those working with Early Years and Primaries 1-3. Since the last research which was conducted in 2016, teaching and support staff also noted increases in issues around the use of mobile telephones. Nationally, there was support for positive approaches to managing behaviour, however a need for meaningful consequences was noted as an important development.

The message to our employees is that violence and aggression from adults is not tolerated. In recognising the development of children and young people’s brains, we are clear that, whilst understood developmentally, we do not accept that employees and other young people should consider violence and aggression as a natural element of their working environment. As a result, we are working hard to reduce these incidents.

The new ASSURE system has been in place since October 2023 and an increase in reporting was anticipated. There are a number of reasons for this, including: some teething issues with the new system around alignment to sectors (which are now being addressed); the ease of access to the system has contributed to the anticipated rise in recorded incidents; and there are a number of pupils for whom there are multiple entries for incidents.

We analyse these incidents on a regular basis and ensure that action is taken to support those impacted, and that those displaying such behaviours are supported appropriately. Senior Managers liaise with their Head Teachers and Centre Heads to interrogate data which causes concerns and scrutinise incidents and how these are managed.

Alongside our Trade Union colleagues, we are in the final stages of reviewing the Corporate police on Violence and Aggression to focus specifically on how incident of this nature can be prevented and the impact minimised. The document provides clear and straight forward instruction for establishments on how such matters should be dealt with in terms of both support for staff and young people impacted by incidents of violence and aggression, and the importance of regularly reviewed and updated risk assessments and individualised Positive Behaviour Plans.

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We are currently developing additional professional learning for our senior leaders in managing this type of behaviour, building on much of the strong work on targeted and whole school nurture, Promoting Positive Relationships and Building on Positive Relationships. This will also be available to Classroom Assistants and Pupil Support Assistants.”

Question

(2) a question by Councillor Kerr to the Leader of the Council in the following terms:

“Has the Leader of the Council met the Transport Minister since the last ordinary meeting of the Council, to discuss the Ardrossan Harbour project, and if so to ask for an update?”

Response

The Leader will respond.

Question

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

“To ask the Cabinet portfolio-holder for Education how many primary and secondary schools in North Ayrshire have defibrillators?”

Response

“47 out of the 48 Primary schools and all the Secondary schools have defibrillators. The defibrillator in Kilmory on Arran is located in Kilmory Hall.”

Question

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

“What is the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care’s response to the latest drug death figures?”

Response

Councillor Johnston will respond.

Question

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

“What provision does North Ayrshire Council have for children moving up to secondary school who require additional support for their education?”

Response

“There is a broad range of supports for children moving from Primary to Secondary Schools. All young people benefit from a transition programme which runs throughout their P7 year, with some establishments extending this to P6 learners. These programmes include social events for parents and children, information sessions, visits to the primary by secondary staff and visits to the secondary environment. Many clusters plan ‘cluster-wide’ events where P7 pupils and their families come together to get to know one another. These programmes are well embedded and support the needs of almost all young people.

For children with additional needs who require some enhancement to their transition, bespoke programmes are put in place. From Primary 5, cluster Primary Heads engage with their colleagues in the secondary school to identify young people for whom the transition to secondary may be particularly challenging. Some young people benefit from what is usually called an ‘enhanced transition’ which can include additional visits with smaller groups. Others may require a more intensive approach and may be identified as appropriate to receive additional support from the ‘Secondary Support Resource’ (SSR). The SSR is a flexible resource available within all our secondary schools. Staff will create a transition bespoke to the learner’s individual needs and this support can be in place from S1 through to S3. The aim is to ensure children feel well supported and able to attend as many mainstream classes as possible. The teams will aim to have learners able to engage with their secondary experience independently where possible.

For learners who are transferring to Lockhart Campus, authority wide SSR provisions (within Irvine Royal Academy and Greenwood Academy) or the Astra Base (within Ardrossan Academy) each transition will be individually designed to match the learner’s needs.”

Question

- (6) a question by Councillor McLean to the Green Environment and Economy in the following terms:

“To the Member for Green Environment and the Economy, what effect does he believe the continued or expanded use of fossil fuels will have on the environment, considering NAC’s climate emergency declaration?”

Response

Councillor Gurney will respond.

Question

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

“Kelio swipe card access is installed at both Bridgegate and Cunninghame House and generate a database of attendance by individual staff.

How many staff have attended each of these offices?

1. One day a week
2. Two days a week
3. Three or more days a week

What is the maximum possible daily attendance for each of these locations?”

Response

“Information taken from the Kelio system for week commencing 11th March 2024 indicates the following attendance patterns at Cunninghame House and Bridgegate:

Attendance	Cunninghame House	Bridgegate
1 day per week	369 employees	86 employees
2 days per week	353 employees	81 employees
3 or more days per week	278 employees	163 employees

Maximum possible daily attendance has not been reduced to reflect people on leave, sickness absence or vacant posts.

Cunninghame House: 1050

Bridgegate House: 450”

Question

- (8) a question by Councillor McLean to the Cabinet Member for Communities, Housing and the Islands in the following terms:

“To ask the Cabinet Member what provisions have been made to increase capacity within the housing department and specifically the team that deals with tenant disputes and anti-social behaviour?”

Response

“As outlined in the HRA Capital Investment Plan, Revenue Budget and Rent Levels for 2024/25 Report presented to the Council meeting on 14 February 2024 and in recognition of the significant financial and service delivery challenges in the coming years, a service review was undertaken during 2023 which focused on reshaping the Housing Service to provide an enhanced, community-based service to our tenants. Key areas of focus within the review included:

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- the identification of emerging best practice in housing service delivery across the country
- improving working practices to best meet the needs of our communities and tenants, including an annual home visit
- delivering value for money and ensuring the best allocation of currently available resources
- areas of statutory compliance

As a result of this review, a new integrated service delivery model - with Housing Operations, Homelessness and Anti-social Behaviour staff teams co-located within our mainland housing offices - is in the process of being implemented and aims to be fully operational by 31 May 2024.

The new delivery model will respond to all housing-related issues on a locality basis, ensuring area teams have a shared understanding of local issues, priorities and emerging issues. It will also ensure that our housing staff are utilised to provide effective service delivery, with a particular focus on prevention work.

The integration of the Antisocial Behaviour Investigation Team within the new locality-based teams will enable a more effective response to tenant issues and antisocial behaviour. By having a coordinated and focussed service response to estate management issues, officers will have the ability to respond to arising issues earlier and prevent escalation of antisocial behaviour to a more serious issue.

Housing Services are also in the process of mapping performance data to identify areas of service priority on a locality basis. Moving forward, this will support the ongoing allocation of staff resources to where they are most needed, in order to support our communities and enable them to thrive.”

Question

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

“To ask the Cabinet portfolio holder for Education if he believes digital inclusion for primary and secondary pupils is important?”

Response

Councillor Macaulay will respond.

Question

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

“Is North Ayrshire Council (including any specific departments or services, e.g. libraries etc.) in the process of, or considering becoming, a ‘Hate Crime Third Party Reporting Centre’? And if so, what risks does that open up the local authority to?”

Response

“North Ayrshire Council continues to keep under review the possible use of its facilities as Hate Crime Third Party Reporting Centres. At the present time there are no active proposals in this regard.

We note there are currently three locations within the North Ayrshire Council area which are Hate Crime Third Party Reporting Centres: Barnardo's North Ayrshire Families Services in Kilwinning, The Gatehouse at Ayrshire Central Hospital in Irvine, and The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety in Ardrossan.

Prior to any final decision being taken in relation to the use of Council facilities for this purpose, appropriate risk assessments and training would require to be carried out.”

Question

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

“To ask the Cabinet portfolio holder what the current civil contingency policy is for dealing with potential fires at battery energy storage systems (BESS)?”

Response

“There has been discussion at the West of Scotland Regional Resilience Partnership (WoSRRP) in response to requests from local resilience partnerships (including Ayrshire) on developing plans to deal with fires at battery energy storage systems. A draft regional plan has recently been prepared by WoSRRP which, once shared with Ayrshire Local Resilience Partnership will enable them to develop a local response document for the sites within Ayrshire, based on the regional plan. This will ensure a consistent approach across the region. For Ayrshire, it is likely that visits to each site may be required so that a specific local response which would include cordons, access routes, etc could be properly developed. It is anticipated that these visits will be scheduled shortly. Contact has already been made with one of the sites (not in North Ayrshire) and a visit will be arranged when they are further forward in the development of the site.

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There is a nationwide list which is available to Resilience partners and is updated monthly so that the Ayrshire Local Resilience Partnership (via Ayrshire Civil Contingencies Team) can ensure that appropriate planning is put in place. There are no Council battery energy storage systems and battery storage does not form part of our solar farm proposals at the current time. The Council is developing a battery storage pilot, aligned to the existing rooftop solar array at West Byrehill. This has not yet been installed and given its scale, it is unlikely to trigger any civil contingencies involvement. The Council will however keep this under review to ensure that any appropriate processes and requirements are adhered to.”

Question

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

“There is a Phase 1 proposal to spend some £1.5 m to reduce the width of the North Promenade in Largs by 50% to incorporate a cycle track. 80% of the Ward 1 Members are opposed to this.

There is also an ongoing consultation in relation to public toilet provision in Largs which may result in the closure of 80% of the toilets. 80% of the Ward 1 Members are opposed to this.

Will the views of local Elected Members prevail?”

Response

Councillor Hill.