

North Ayrshire Council
27 March 2024

At a Meeting of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m. involving a combination of participation by remote electronic means and physical attendance within the Council Chambers, Irvine

Present (Physical Participation)

John Bell, Marie Burns, Eleanor Collier, Joe Cullinane, Anthea Dickson, Stewart Ferguson, Todd Ferguson, Scott Gallacher, Tony Gurney, Alan Hill, Cameron Inglis, Margaret Johnson, Christina Larsen, Shaun Macaulay, Tom Marshall, Nairn McDonald, Matthew McLean, Louise McPhater, Davina McTiernan, Donald Reid, Donald L. Reid, Chloé Robertson, Ronnie Stalker, Angela Stephen and John Sweeney.

Present (Remote Electronic Participation)

Timothy Billings, Scott Davidson, Robert Foster and Amanda Kerr.

In Attendance

C. Hatton, Chief Executive; C. Cameron, Director (Health and Social Care Partnership); D. Hammond, Head of Service (Sustainability, Transport and Corporate Property) (Place); R. Leith, Head of Service (Connected Communities) and A. McClelland, Head of Service (Education) Communities and Education); M. Boyd, Head of Service (Finance); and A. Craig, Head of Service, R. Lynch, Senior Manager (Legal Services); M. McColm, Senior Manager (Communications), M. Anderson, Senior Manager (Committee and Member Services) and H. Clancy and S. Wilson, Committee Services Officer (Democratic Services).

Chair

Provost Dickson in the Chair.

Apologies

Jean McClung, Jim Montgomerie and Ian Murdoch.

1. Provost's Remarks

The Provost welcomed those present to the meeting and dealt with preliminary matters, including intimation that the meeting, which was taking place on a hybrid basis, would be live streamed to the internet.

2. Apologies

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

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest in terms of Standing Order 11 and Section 5 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

There were no declarations of the Party Whip.

4. Previous Minutes

The accuracy of the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 14 February 2024 and the Special Meeting held on 28 February 2024 was confirmed and the Minutes signed in accordance with Paragraph 7(1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

5. Provost's Report

Submitted report by the Provost for the period from 5 February 2024-17 March 2024.

The Provost highlighted elements of her written report, including:

- a groundbreaking event to mark the start of construction on new green energy projects;
- various events involving young people, including the opportunity to congratulate newly elected MSYPs as they took up office, the Young Musician of the Year competition and the launch of "Beat the Street"; and
- the work of a variety of groups across North Ayrshire.

Noted.

6. Leader's Report

Submitted report by the Leader of the Council for the period for 5 February-17 March 2024.

Noted.

7. Council Minute Volume

Submitted for noting the Minutes of meetings of committees of the Council held in the period 24 November 2023-29 February 2024.

Noted.

8. Appointment to Committee

The Council was invited to consider a nomination to fill a vacancy in terms of the position of Vice Chair of the Police and Fire and Rescue Committee.

Councillor Gallacher, seconded by Councillor Inglis, moved that Councillor S. Ferguson be appointed as Vice Chair of the Police and Fire and Rescue Committee. There being no other nomination, Councillor S. Ferguson was duly appointed.

9. North Ayrshire Ventures Trust Ltd.

Submitted a report by the Head of Service (Democratic) to appoint a new director to the Board of North Ayrshire Ventures Trust Limited.

Councillor Hill, seconded by Councillor Robertson, moved approval of the recommendations set out in the officer's report. There being no amendment, the motion was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Council agreed to appoint David Hammond to the Board of North Ayrshire Ventures Trust Limited, effective from 1 April 2024.

Councillor Kerr joined the meeting (remotely) at this point.

10. Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

Submitted a report by the Head of Service (Democratic) to approve the outcome of the statutory review of polling districts and polling places. The finalised proposals for polling places were detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

Councillor Burns, seconded by Councillor Macaulay, moved approval of the recommendations set out in the officer's report. There being no amendment, the motion was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Council agreed as follows:

- (a) to note the conclusions and recommendations of the review of polling districts and polling places; and
- (b) to approve the venues listed in Appendix 1 to the report as polling places for future electoral events.

11. Member Officer Working Group on Local Representation

Submitted a report by the Executive Director (Communities and Education) on the findings of a short-life Working Group on Local Representation.

Councillor Hill, seconded by Councillor Robertson, moved approval of the recommendations set out in the officer's report. There being no amendment, the motion was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Council agreed to note (i) the work carried out by the short-life Working Group on Local Representation and (ii) the conclusions reached by the working group.

12. Questions

In terms of Standing Order 14, submitted:

- (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 the 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?”

Councillor Macaulay thanked the Member for his question and highlighted elements of the following written 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 policy on Violence and Aggression to focus specifically on how incidents of this nature can be prevented and the impact minimised. The document provides clear and straightforward 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.

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.”

As a supplementary question, Councillor Marshall asked about the number of North Ayrshire pupils who had been formally and informally excluded in the past three years.

Councillor Macaulay responded by undertaking to provide Councillor Marshall with the requested figures.

With the permission of the Provost, clarification was sought, and received, that the figures requested by Councillor Marshall would be provided to all Members for their information.

(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?”

Councillor Burns thanked the Member for her question and responded in the following terms:

“I reported to the last council meeting that I, the Chief Executive and representatives from Arran had met with the then Cabinet Secretary for the Economy [Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy] to make him aware of the impact the ferry issues were having on the island. That contributed to the Scottish budget announcement of financial support for island businesses.

Again, with island representatives and the local MSP, we followed this up with a meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Transport [Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity of Scotland], Fiona Hyslop, about a month ago now. As I am sure Councillor Kerr will appreciate, the issues around ferry concerns and the delay in agreeing the business case for Ardrossan Harbour were put very forcefully by everyone around the table and the Cabinet Secretary recognised that. We asked for a greater degree of urgency on the part of Transport Scotland and agreed to do whatever we could within the council to expedite this. We also asked for a date to be arranged for the next Taskforce, as improved communication is vital. We have not had a response from Transport Scotland as yet but we are chasing that up and we are hopeful that completion of the business case is imminent.

We had a further meeting last night with the representatives from Arran who attended the meeting with the Cabinet Secretary. As a result, I will be writing again to the Cabinet Secretary to push on our request for the completion of the business case and a meeting of the Taskforce.”

As Councillor Kerr was unable to ask a supplementary question due to connectivity issues, it was noted that the Member would have the opportunity to liaise directly with the Leader outwith the meeting.

(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?”

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

“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.”

(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?”

Councillor Johnston thanked the Member for her question and responded by expressing the view that each drug death was preventable and that the statistics themselves did not reveal their tragic impact on individuals, families, carers and communities.

The Cabinet Member referred to the national mission to reduce drug related deaths and improve lives, and to a number of initiatives, including the introduction of Medical Assisted Treatment standards, a focus on increased support to individuals following a non-fatal overdose, increased Naloxone supply, and easier access to residential rehabilitation. Councillor Johnston concluded her remarks by emphasising the importance of these initiatives along with longer-term solutions to address adverse impacts of people's health and wellbeing, including inequality and poverty.

As a supplementary question, Councillor McPhater made reference to increases in the number of drug-related deaths and to the number of Scottish Government Drugs Ministers who had been in office in recent years, and asked if the Cabinet Member agreed that there must be continued support for the work done by communities and within communities to help those affected by drugs.

Councillor Johnston responded by advising that she was unable to speak on behalf of the Scottish Government with regard to ministerial appointments. The Cabinet Member offered to read out a list of the various actions being taken by the Council and its partners to address the issue of drug deaths or, otherwise, to have the information in question circulated outwith the meeting.

Councillor McPhater advised that she was content to have the information sent to her.

(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?”

Councillor Macaulay thanked the Member for her question and highlighted elements of the following written 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."

As a supplementary question, Councillor Stephen made reference to concerns which had been expressed by parents in light of councils reviewing their support for young people with additional needs, including transport to school, and asked whether there had been any change in this provision in North Ayrshire over the past year.

Councillor Macaulay responded by offering to look into any specific case the Member wished to discuss and by undertaking to double-check that there had been no changes in terms of the transfer policy within North Ayrshire schools.

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

"To the Cabinet Member, what effect does he believe the continued or expanded use of fossil fuels will have on the environment, considering NAC's climate emergency declaration?"

Councillor Gurney thanked the Member for his question and responded by referring to the use of fossil fuels and the concomitant effect on the environment, as exemplified by catastrophic climate change, which presented an existential threat to the planet. The Cabinet Member asserted that, to his knowledge, the only people attempting to deny this scientific truth, were far right agitators, paid shells of the fossil fuel industry and conspiracy theorists.

As a supplementary question, Councillor McLean referred to the need for the Council's actions to match its words and, given that its housing stock represented the largest part of the Council's estate, asked why it had committed to a further generation of fossil fuel technology in home boilers.

Councillor Gurney responded by asserting that, as part of its ongoing response to the climate emergency declaration, the Council was aiming to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and decarbonise its estate through the various measures set out in the Sustainable North Ayrshire Strategy. The Cabinet Member advised that many of these measures were being implemented in the Council's new housing estate.

Councillor Gurney went on to acknowledge the financial challenges of reaching net zero, along with other issues, including the pace of technology and developments in the supply chain and skills within the sector. The Cabinet Member concluded his remarks by acknowledging that this was a national issue shared by all local authorities and RSLs [Registered Social Landlords] and advising that the Council would be signing up to the Scottish Housing Net Zero Standard.

(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?”

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

“Information taken from the Kelio system for week commencing 11 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”

As a supplementary question, Councillor Marshall made reference to apparent differences in the attendance trends relating to Cunninghame House and Bridgegate, and asked if the Cabinet Member had an explanation.

At the request of the Leader, the Provost was invited to rule on the competence of the question, given that it appeared to relate to an operational matter. The Provost exercised her discretion to allow the Cabinet Member to respond.

The Cabinet Member responded by advising that she was unaware of the individual circumstances of staff, but that, simply because an officer was not in the building, it did not mean that they were not working. Councillor Larsen reminded the Member that Elected Members also worked on an agile basis and they did not question each other about working from outwith the building.

(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?”

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

“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:

- 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.”

As a supplementary question, Councillor McLean referred to Police Scotland’s pilot programme in respect of non-attendance at low level incidents and asked about the capacity of the Council’s Housing Service to deal with incidents of anti-social behaviour which might escalate as a result.

Councillor Hill responded by suggesting that it was probably too soon to answer this question, but that reorganising the Housing Service on a locality basis was likely to mean that it could respond more quickly to local issues. The Cabinet Member advised that the impact of changes to Police Scotland policy would be monitored and reported back.

(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?”

Councillor Macaulay thanked the Member for his question and responded by agreeing that digital inclusion was important and advising that this had been reflected in the recent Capital Programme approved at the beginning of the month.

As a supplementary question, Councillor T. Ferguson invited the Cabinet Member to join him in condemning the recent announcement by the SNP Education Secretary [Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills] that the government was scrapping its digital device programme and asked how the Member was now planning to deliver on the promise that every pupil in North Ayrshire would have an electronic device, free internet connection and the support to use it.

Councillor Macaulay responded by pointing out that financial conditions had significantly changed since March 2021 and commenting on the UK Government's role in this. The Cabinet Member advised that, notwithstanding this, the Council was continuing to deliver on the commitment, with over 3000 Chromebooks having been purchased using Scottish Government Covid Recovery funding and the Council's own resources and work currently ongoing to extend this further into community settings.

Councillor Macaulay concluded his remarks by acknowledging the challenges faced and reiterating the Council's commitment to delivering on digital devices.

(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?"

Councillor Burns thanked the Member for his question and highlighted elements of the following written 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."

As a supplementary question, Councillor McLean asked whether, in the event of any change, the matter could be brought to a Policy Advisory Panel and, thereafter, a meeting of the full Council, rather than the Cabinet, in light of the controversial nature of the policy.

Councillor Burns responded by advising that she was unaware of controversy around third party reporting centre policy, given that it had been in place for a number of years, but agreed to the Member's request, undertaking to bring any developments to the Policy Advisory Panel.

(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)?”

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

“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.

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.”

As a supplementary question, Councillor T. Ferguson, referring to the scale of the Hunterston site, potential further sites in North Ayrshire and reported fire risks associated with BESS facilities, asked whether a briefing note could be provided to all Elected Members once the regional plan was completed, so that reassurance could be provided to their constituents.

Councillor Larsen responded in the affirmative.

(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?"

The Provost intimated that, as the question covered two Cabinet portfolios, Councillor Hill would respond.

Councillor Hill, in his capacity as Cabinet Member for Communities, Housing and Islands, thanked the Member for his question and responded by suggesting that it was too soon to advise on this. The Cabinet Member advised that the Sustrans proposal was still in the early stages and that further consultation would take place with local Members prior to public engagement. Councillor Hill emphasised that this was a Sustrans project, not one funded by the Council and that he would be reluctant to refuse investment in the locality without having an opportunity to explore it further.

The Cabinet Member also suggested that 100% of people would be opposed to the closure of public toilets, but that the current financial situation meant that this needed to be considered. Councillor Hill advised that discussion had been taking place about the possibility of a local group taking over the running of the facilities and that this was ongoing.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Marshall, reiterating that 80% of local Elected Members were opposed to the project and reflecting on the purpose of the promenade as a place for walking rather than cycling, asked whether the Cabinet Member thought that significant sums of money should be spent on this project or on keeping public conveniences open and filling potholes.

Councillor Hill responded by reminding the Member that the Sustrans funding could not be used for public toilets or filling potholes. The Cabinet Member advised that he was not prepared to close down discussion on bringing investment into the area. Councillor Hill concluded his response by suggesting that the promenade had always been used by cyclists and rejecting any suggestion that young cyclists in particular should be redirected to the main road.

Councillor Foster lost his connection to the meeting during consideration of this item of business and effectively left the meeting at this point.

13. Motions

In terms of Standing Order 15, submitted:

- (1) a motion proposed by Councillor T. Ferguson, seconded by Councillor Billings, in the following terms:

“That the Council:

1. welcomes the news from the UK government Spring Budget announcement that there will be an additional £48.5 million in funding for local authorities in Scotland via the Barnett consequentials;
2. further notes that the Deputy First Minister of Scotland has said that this funding will only be passed onto those local authorities who agreed to freeze council tax in their 2024/25 budget proposals; and
3. asks that once the additional funding allocation has been announced for North Ayrshire, it is brought back to full Council so that all 33 Councillors can have an input into where best to spend this additional money.”

There being no amendment, the motion was declared carried.

- (2) a motion by Councillor T. Ferguson, seconded by Councillor Marshall, in the following terms:

“That the Council:

1. notes that North Ayrshire Council recognises the long, proud, and safe delivery of low-carbon nuclear energy at Hunterston A and B stations;
2. further notes, that the UK government recently announced the largest expansion in nuclear power in 70 years with a focus being on the delivery of Small Modular Reactors;
3. understands that North Ayrshire Council have declared a climate emergency
4. finally, asks that the Chief Executive Officer write to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero and the Minister for Nuclear asking them to consider Hunterston and Ardeer as future sites for emerging SMR development here in the UK; thereby protecting our excellent nuclear workforce and providing vital employment for generations to come.”

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

“That the Council:

1. notes that the Scottish Government’s energy policy recognises the contribution that nuclear generation has made to the energy mix in Scotland but specifically opposes the building of new nuclear power stations;

2. notes that in North Ayrshire, the challenges of the Climate Change emergency and Net Zero targets will be best met by the continued development of renewable and other low carbon energy sources, related employment opportunities and the promotion and support of alternative low carbon solutions; and
3. notes that apart from the inevitable nuclear waste legacy, there are questions around the cost effectiveness and ultimate value for money of the UK Government's 'Great British Nuclear' strategy and planned Small Modular Reactors."

There followed debate and summing up.

Following a point of order by Councillor Marshall in terms of Standing Order 12.2, Councillor Cullinane clarified remarks he had made during debate and offered an apology for any unintended offence caused to Councillor T. Ferguson.

On a division and a roll call vote, there voted for the amendment, Councillors Burns, Collier, Davidson, Dickson, Gurney, Hill, Johnson, Larsen, Macaulay, McPhater, McTiernan and Robertson (12) and for the motion, Councillors Bell, Billings, Cullinane, S. Ferguson, T. Ferguson, Gallacher, Inglis, Kerr, Marshall, McLean, D. Reid, Stalker, Stephen and Sweeney (14), Councillors D.L. Reid and McDonald abstaining, and the motion was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Council agreed as follows:

- (a) to note that (i) North Ayrshire Council recognised the long, proud, and safe delivery of low-carbon nuclear energy at Hunterston A and B stations, (ii) the UK government had recently announced the largest expansion in nuclear power in 70 years, with a focus being on the delivery of Small Modular Reactors and (iii) North Ayrshire Council had declared a climate emergency; and
- (b) that the Chief Executive write to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero and the Minister for Nuclear asking them to consider Hunterston and Ardeer as future sites for emerging SMR development here in the UK, thereby protecting our excellent nuclear workforce and providing vital employment for generations to come.

Councillor Gallacher left the meeting at this point.

- (3) a motion by Councillor McPhater, seconded by Councillor Cullinane, in the following terms:

"Council agrees to provide a £50 clothing grant to all eligible* 3- and 4-year-olds in Early Years during the 2024/25 school year, funded through a proportion of the £123,000 residual balance unallocated in the Council's Cost of Living support fund.

*based on the existing criteria for the school clothing grant."

There being no amendment, the motion was declared carried.

(4) a motion by Councillor McDonald, seconded by Councillor Cullinane, in the following terms:

“Council instructs officers to work to implement expanded free school meals to all P6/7s for the 2024/25 Academic year, commencing August 2024, for those not currently eligible and the cost of up to £1.403m would be covered by utilising the Service Concession Council reserves.”

Members asked questions of clarification of the mover of the motion and the Section 95 Officer in respect of the following:

- the proposed source of funding and whether it would be for just one year;
- whether the intention of the motion was that a report be presented on this matter or that the decision be implemented;
- whether any staff would be employed on a one-year fixed term contract;
- the financial implications of using reserves;
- whether the £1.4 million included the cost of food, staff and any kitchen upgrades;
- separate provision for related capital costs, including the cost of reopening kitchens which had been closed;
- the potential impact of not being in a position to continue providing the service in future; and
- the feasibility of undertaking necessary works to allow implementation from the start of the academic year.

In terms of Standing Order 15.1, Councillor Macaulay, seconded by Councillor Burns, moved the direct negative.

There followed debate and summing up.

On a division and a roll call vote, there voted for the amendment, Councillors Billings, Burns, Collier, Davidson, Dickson, Gurney, Hill, Johnson, Larsen, Macaulay, McLean, McTiernan and Robertson (13) and for the motion, Councillors Bell, Cullinane, Kerr, McDonald, McPhater, D. Reid, Stalker and Sweeney (8), Councillors S. Ferguson, T. Ferguson, Inglis, Marshall, D.L. Reid and Stephen abstaining, and the amendment was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Council agreed not to proceed.

(5) a motion by Councillor Robertson, seconded by Councillor Burns, in the following terms:

“Council agrees the increasing rate of violence against public sector workers is unacceptable and therefore agrees to sign up to UNISON’s Violence at Work Charter. In recognition of the importance of the safety of employees, signing up to the Charter would mean that North Ayrshire Council has committed to:

1. a written violence and aggression at work policy, which is available to all staff, with a policy that also covers lone working.
2. responsibility for implementing these policies lies with a senior manager.
3. measures taken to reduce staff working in isolated buildings, offices or other work areas to a minimum.
4. encouraging staff to report all violent incidents and they are told how to do this.
5. collecting and monitoring data on violent incidents on a regular and ongoing basis.
6. where they are in place, union safety reps are able to access this data and are consulted on solutions to issues relating to violence in the workplace.
7. thorough risk assessments are conducted for staff placed in vulnerable situations.
8. support pathways in place for staff who are victims of violence at work, so that they know where to turn for advice and support.
9. training to ensure staff are aware of the appropriate way to deal with threatening situations.
10. where appropriate, independent counselling services are available to staff who are the victims of violence at work.”

A Member asked a question of clarification of the Section 95 Officer with regard to any changes which may require to be made to Council policy as a result of the motion.

There being no amendment, the motion was declared carried.

14. Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.

The meeting ended at 4.00 p.m.