



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

LEADER'S REPORT

For the period covering: 14 September – 1
November 2020

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



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AYRSHIRE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD AND ECONOMIC JOINT COMMITTEE, 14 September

On 14 September I attended the Ayrshire Economic Partnership Board Meeting followed by the Ayrshire Economic Joint Committee where Board members received updates on progression of various projects included in our Ayrshire Growth Deal Programme.

The signing off of the Ayrshire Growth Deal is an important step in the region's recovery from the economic impact caused by Covid-19, which has resulted in a large part of our regional economy closed for business therefore affecting jobs and investment in the business sector across the region.

Evidence emerging since lockdown began suggests that there are various sectors and themes critical to supporting the recovery and renewal of the Ayrshire economy. These include:

- Advance Manufacturing
- Aerospace/Space
- Clean Growth
- Community Wealth Building
- Food and Drink
- Life Sciences
- Visitor Economy
- Business
- Digital Connectivity
- Innovation
- Skills

The development of detailed actions and subsequent delivery of themes will be framed through a Community Wealth Building approach that seeks to harness assets, resources, community strength and relationships within Ayrshire to deliver improved outcomes for our communities.

I am also pleased to report that at the meeting of the Ayrshire Economic Partnership Board it was agreed that East and South Ayrshire Councils would sign up to our Community Wealth Building Anchor Charter. The Charter commits all the big public anchor institutions (the three Ayrshire Councils, NHS Ayrshire and Arran, Ayrshire College and Scottish Enterprise) to using their power as procurement buyers, employers and landowners to improve the Ayrshire



economy. This is a big moment in our Community Wealth Building journey, and I look forward to them all helping build and retain local wealth in Ayrshire.

ARDROSSAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TRUST, 15 September

On 15 September, I gave a Community Wealth Building briefing to members of the Ardrossan Community Development Trust. The briefing outlined the CWB strategy and how this affects our community groups. My thanks to Julie McLachlan, our Senior Manager in North Ayrshire Council for participating in this with me and for her continued hard work and commitment in driving forward our Community Wealth Building strategy.

CENTRE FOR LOCAL ECONOMIC STRATEGIES - COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING IN NORTHERN IRELAND EVENT, 16 September

I was delighted to take part an event hosted by Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) for those interested in Community Wealth Building in Northern Ireland, sharing our story of how North Ayrshire Council has become the first local authority in Scotland to adopt Community Wealth Building. This seminar was for third sector organisations and local government officers and enabled them to hear how the Northern Irish economy can be rebuilt post-Covid through the principles of Community Wealth Building.

INCLUSIVE GROWTH NETWORK LAUNCH, 17 September

Together with other Council Leaders throughout the UK, I was asked to take part in an Inclusive Growth Network Launch hosted by the Centre for Progressive Policy. The event provided the opportunity for politicians and expert speakers to discuss the role for local leadership in spearheading the shift to an inclusive economy through the process of recovery from Covid-19.

SCOTLAND EXCEL SUB COMMITTEE MEETING, 18 September

On 18 September, having been recently appointed to represent North Ayrshire Council on the Scotland Excel Committee, I took part in my first Sub Committee meeting. I look forward to working with Scotland Excel in the months ahead, particularly on how Scotland Excel can embed Community Wealth Building into their frameworks.

COSLA LEADERS, 25 September

I attended COSLA Leaders on 25 September where Leaders discussed a UK Government consultation paper on Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children, an update on the UK Internal Market Bill post Brexit and national protocol for handling cases and outbreaks of Covid-19.



Leaders also heard more about the Digital Boost Programme, following Scottish Government approval to increase funding by £1.5m for the Digital Boost Programme. (£1.63m to £3.13m.) The paper sets out a pilot approach for grant funding to test small business need and adoption of new technologies and proposed options for the dispersal of funds to local authorities.

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING COMMISSION, 25 September

On 25 September the Community Wealth Building (CWB) Commission met once again and I am delighted to say we were joined by the Leaders of East Ayrshire Council and South Ayrshire Council, Councillor Douglas Reid and Councillor Peter Henderson, for the first time. This means that we can continue to build on our Community Wealth Building efforts for the benefit of Ayrshire as a whole.

The Commission received a report containing a copy of the CWB Anchor Charter. The Charter is aligned to the five pillars of CWB and includes a sixth pillar on the environment focused on achieving net zero.

The Charter was agreed by the Commission subject to the inclusion of 'access to Trade Union membership' under the Fair Employment pillar. It was agreed that the Charter would be launched at the start of Challenge Poverty Week and we should promote this widely given it is a significant document.

The Commission will meet again on 10 December.

CREATIVE BUREAUCRACY FESTIVAL, 29 September

I took part in an international forum festival called "Creative Bureaucracy" on 29 September hosted by a number of organisations in France. The festival brought people from across the globe together to discuss how nations, and specifically municipal governments, had responded to the pandemic and were building alternative models from it. I was asked to participate and present on North Ayrshire's Community Wealth Building strategy and new municipalism.

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING EXPERT ADVISORY PANEL, 30 September

The Community Wealth Building Expert Advisory Panel met on 30 September to hear an update on our CWB progression over the past few months. The Panel also approved our Anchor Charter prior to its official launch during Challenge Poverty Week. There was also discussion about the feasibility of a community bank as part of our strategy. I would like to thank the Panel



members once again for their contribution and in particular to Sarah Deas (Wellbeing Economic Alliance, Scotland) who is Chair of the Panel.

CHALLENGE POVERTY WEEK, 5 – 12 October

North Ayrshire Council has supported the Poverty Alliance campaign “Challenge Poverty Week” for the past five years and in that time have done some incredible work to tackle poverty. This year the national campaign had more engagement than ever, by a wide range of organisations despite the restrictions imposed on us by Covid-19

In June 2017 we set up the Fair for All Commission with the aim of ensuring the movement to tackle poverty has those who experience it at its heart. Some other ways that the Council have challenged poverty over the past five years include:

- Establishment of a Fair for All Youth Commission, to enable young people to be at the heart of the work we do, including reducing the cost of the school day
- Better Off North Ayrshire programme engaged with over 1,000 local people to help people maximise their income. The scheme helped save an incredible £1,057,855
- In a bid to tackle period poverty, North Ayrshire Council introduced free sanitary products in its secondary schools and later extended the initiative, becoming the first local authority in the UK to offer free sanitary provision in all of its public buildings
- The award-winning Holiday School Meal programme that ensures every child, no matter their background, has access to a warm, healthy meal when they're not at school
- The We Work for Families programme, launched in partnership with the Lennox Partnership, provides parents support with debt, childcare and housing issues and helps parents plan and prepare for returning to work, including help with finding jobs
- The launch of a new enhanced 'birth to potty' real nappy scheme that could save families up to £1300 per child on the cost of disposable nappies

On 5 October, we started Challenge Poverty Week by launching our Community Wealth Building Anchor Charter. As previously mentioned, the Charter commits all the big public anchor institutions (the three Ayrshire Councils, NHS Ayrshire and Arran, Ayrshire College and Scottish Enterprise) to using their power as procurement buyers, employers and landowners to improve the Ayrshire economy. This is a big moment in our Community Wealth Building journey, and I look forward to them all helping build and retain local wealth in Ayrshire.

Later that evening I took part in a live panel discussion on Facebook where we looked at how Community Wealth Building will help us tackle poverty and achieve a wellbeing economy in

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North Ayrshire as we build back better, fairer and greener. My thanks to Sarah Deas (Wellbeing Economic Alliance Scotland) and Peter Kelly (Chief Executive of the Poverty Alliance) for joining me for the discussion.

Also, as part of Challenge Poverty Week, we focused on our work to tackle food poverty and I was delighted to see the official launch of the new Pantry service at Whitlees Community Centre. The Pantry is an excellent initiative that will allow local residents to become members and get access to low cost food. A massive well done to Julia and all the team at Whitlees.

This Pantry is part of our new North Ayrshire Food System which is seeking to develop networks of community fridges, larders, community supermarkets and food coops in line with a more sustainable approach to food with dignity.

We are continuing our commitment to tackling holiday hunger and confirmed that we would provide £20 food vouchers during the school holidays to all those children eligible for free school meals, like we did during the summer.

My Cabinet approved our second child poverty action plan with one of our key priorities being to reduce the Cost of the School Day. Cllr Foster, the Cabinet's lead member for tackling poverty, will chair a working group that will make recommendations to reduce school costs across the whole of North Ayrshire.

The Cabinet also approved a new "Better Off Hub" demonstrator project. The project will be a 'design experiment' to test a new service concept with a view to rolling the service out further. It will be a Public-Social-Partnership between the council and third sector partners and will provide a one-stop shop for debt advice, welfare rights, energy advice and employability services as well as signposting to other services. The demonstrator project is likely to be located in the Three Towns.

My thanks to everyone who contributed to the success of Challenge Poverty Week and provided support throughout.

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING PRESENTATIONS, early October

I took part in various Community Wealth Building Presentations and briefings in the week beginning 5 October. These included

- A meeting on 6 October with Liverpool Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram and relevant officers to discuss areas of common interest including Community Wealth Building, Inclusive Economy, Wellbeing Economics and the LCR Land Commission. Both Liverpool and

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North Ayrshire Councils are part of the Centre for Progressive Policy Inclusive Growth Network and both are members of the Wellbeing Economy Alliance

- Centre for Local Economic Strategies Leaders of Practice meeting on 7 October. These are semi-regular meetings for local Leaders who are advancing Community Wealth Building.

INTERVIEW WITH BBC RADIO 4, 11 October

On 11 October I took part in an interview with BBC Radio 4 on the impact the pandemic is having on our region and on our island communities. I mentioned the following points

- economic impact on hospitality businesses throughout North Ayrshire
- impact specifically on our islands (October school holiday week and this may impact on holiday bookings, cancellations)
- Islands already disproportionately affected by pandemic
- Islands do not have same amount of cases as mainland

I continue to engage with Scottish Government Ministers to look at how we can look to resolve these issues.

MEETING WITH NORTH AYRSHIRE BUSINESSES, 13 October

On 13 October I had the opportunity to speak with several businesses in the hospitality sector in North Ayrshire to hear how the new restrictions will impact on them and the staff they employ.

What has been clear from those conversations is that businesses are concerned that the replacement for the current furlough scheme won't be enough. Every business I have spoken to has real concerns that the new scheme won't provide the levels of support that were provided at the start of the pandemic.

This is a real threat to jobs. The furlough scheme has been a success, it has sustained people's employment even when the economy shut down. When the scheme was introduced the UK Government looked at the measures that had already been introduced by other countries to protect jobs and created a scheme that would work for the UK.

Now more than ever we need this support to continue, it is vital that we look to the support offered by other big economies and use their experiences to inform what we do in the weeks and months ahead to make sure jobs and wages are protected in North Ayrshire.



Businesses not directly affected by closures, but part of the supply chain also need support if they are to survive.

FAIR SAY ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS, 19, 20 & 22 October

On 19, 20 and 22 October I had the opportunity to talk to several key workers as we started this year's 'Fair Say' sessions with council staff. The Council's Chief Executive, Craig Hatton, and I launched 'Fair Say' last year as an opportunity for council staff to ask questions to the political and operational leaders of the Council. Unlike last year, when we visited all six localities across North Ayrshire, this year's sessions are taking place under the Covid restrictions and are being held virtually.

What's already clear from the first three sessions is our staff's dedication to supporting residents. The questions and contributions from staff have centered on the needs of those who use their services and how, in these challenging times, they can do more to make them more accessible and ensure they are the highest quality possible.

That is the public service ethos that runs throughout North Ayrshire Council. Teams dedicated to supporting and improving our communities. It's that dedication that drove the Council's effective response to the Covid pandemic and I am pleased to be able to report back to staff at these 'Fair Say' sessions on the numbers they helped achieve – 196 children of key workers supported per day at childcare hubs, 27,900 calls handled by the community hubs, 12,640 prescriptions delivered to vulnerable residents, over 1.5million items of PPE delivered to frontline staff, £24million in grants distributed to over 2000 local businesses and over 1million meals delivered to families during the national lockdown before we transitioned to the £20 per week voucher scheme for those on free school meals.

WEBINAR WITH IMPROVEMENT SERVICE, 20 October

On 20 October I took part in a Community Wealth Building webinar hosted by the Improvement Service and attended by various politicians from across Scotland. Also taking part was Neil McInroy (Chief Executive at the Centre for Local Economic Strategies, CLES). The session provided the opportunity for others to hear more about our CWB journey in North Ayrshire and to put questions to some of the speakers. These included questions around a community bank and investment in Strathclyde Pension Fund.

COSLA SPECIAL LEADERS MEETING, 26 October

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On 26 October, following the announcement by the First Minister on 23 October that a new tier system for tackling Covid-19 would be introduced in Scotland, I joined other Council Leaders for a COSLA Special Leaders meeting. The meeting was joined by Deputy First Minister, John Swinney.

Leaders were provided with details of [Scotland's Strategic Framework](#) for tackling COVID-19, which was published by the Scottish Government on Friday 23 October.

The report provides an initial assessment of the implications of this framework for Local Government for consideration and for local Leaders for their views and any additional input to inform COSLA's response.

HOLYROOD MAGAZINE: SCOTLAND THE RECOVERY, 27 October

On 27 October I took part in a webinar hosted by Holyrood Events which looked at the challenges ahead as Scotland looks to recover from the economic disruption of COVID-19, including the threat of further pandemics, the climate crisis, technological upheaval and demographic change.

This event provided a much-needed opportunity for key stakeholders from across the public, private, and third sectors to get together and discuss how Scotland can move forward and build a post-pandemic society capable of meeting the challenges of the future.

It is clear that radical action will be needed to jump-start the Scottish economy and it's vital that we "build back better" and become more resilient and that is why I was delighted to talk about why Community Wealth Building can do just that.

COSLA CONVENTION, 30 October

I attended the COSLA Convention on 30 October together with other elected members from North Ayrshire Council, where attendees were updated on a range of subjects including a paper on the progress in supporting and delivering Public Health Reform.

This includes the establishment of Public Health Scotland and publication of the organisation's Strategic Plan which is fully in alignment with COSLA's priorities and the Local Government Blueprint. The plan emphasises the importance of working with Local Government to protect and improve population health in Scotland. The strategic plan describes how the organisation will work in partnership with National and Local Government and communities on the following priorities

- COVID-19: response, renewal and recovery



- Children and Poverty
- Mental health
- Place and Community

COSLA LEADERS MEETING, 30 October

Following on from COSLA Convention I attended a COSLA Leaders meeting, where Leaders received updates on a range of subjects including, an EU Exit Update, Social Renewal Advisory Board Update and more detail about Trauma Informed Workforce.

Leaders and decision-makers have a vital role to play in championing a trauma-informed approach and embodying trauma-informed principles. It is crucial that leaders and decision-makers communicate their commitment to supporting those affected by trauma in their communities and workforces. Actions to support this may include ensuring a trauma-informed approach is embedded and prioritised at a senior level across different community planning agendas and COVID-19 recovery and renewal plans.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Joe Cullinane". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Councillor Joe Cullinane
Leader North Ayrshire Council