



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrhachd Àir a Tuath

LEADER'S REPORT

For the period covering: 7 December – 7
February 2021

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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COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING COMMISSION, 10 December

On 10 December our Community Wealth Building (CWB) Commission met to agree a refresh of the Terms of Reference to reflect changes in the membership and remit of the group. The Commission also discussed a draft work plan for the year ahead.

The refresh will now shift its focus from developing the North Ayrshire Council CWB Strategy to progressing and promoting an Ayrshire-wide collaborative approach. There is increased emphasis on the role of the Commission in encouraging wider local and regional Anchor institutions in CWB initiatives, sharing success stories and promoting good practice as well as receiving updates on the implementation of the Ayrshire Growth Deal's £3 million CWB Fund.

The workplan for the year will focus on three workstreams primarily:

- Procurement
- Fair Employment
- Land Assets

A Lead Officer Working Group, comprising officers appointed by the Commission and wider regional Anchor Institutions as required, will meet quarterly to take forward this programme of work to develop and embed Community Wealth Building practices across Ayrshire.

SCOTLAND EXCEL EXECUTIVE SUB COMMITTEE AND JOINT COMMITTEE, 11 December

I attended both the Scotland Excel Executive Sub Committee and Joint Committee on 11 December. Attendees discussed a range of subjects including Revenue estimates for 2021/22, income stream updates, a Brexit update and the Joint Operating Plan Performance Report. The Performance Report for April to December 2020 was measured against the following objectives for the year:

- Shaping the delivery of innovative public services
- Becoming sustainable in everything we do.
- Placing people at the heart of our business



- Delivering sustainable and scalable growth.

The next meeting of the Scotland Excel Executive Sub Committee will be held on 29 January.

COSLA LEADERS, 11 December

COSLA Leaders met on 11 December for their final meeting of 2020. Agenda items included Replacement of EU Structural Funds, an update on Local Government Finance, Early Years and Childcare – 1140 hours, the National Performance Framework and a Recovery paper on Lessons Learned from the Pandemic.

Work was carried out by the Recovery Special Interest Group (SIG) to find out the lessons learned from the response to COVID-19 to date by local authorities. In the draft report, North Ayrshire Council receives recognition for its swift implementation of the Community Support Hubs and the development of “Community Books”. The report further highlights numerous emerging areas of success such as:

- The development of new services in response to Covid
- Adaptation and Innovation
- Democratic accountability (making quick decisions, empowerment)
- Support for local economies
- Digital advancement
- Role of Local Resilience Partnerships/Community Planning Partnerships (CPP)
- Partnership working with the third sector

The report also identified several areas which were challenging. These include:

- Impact on local economies
- Budget pressures on local government
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Community engagement
- Sustainability of the third sector
- Environmental health
- How we use data across partnerships

Both sets of findings are similar to those of North Ayrshire Council and are covered in our Recovery and Renewal Strategy. The report concludes that Local Government has been essential in the response to COVID-19 and has taken significant steps to adapt and support our communities, including our most vulnerable groups, across Scotland.

ARDROSSAN TASK FORCE, 16 December

I attended a meeting of the Ardrossan Task Force on 16 December, chaired by Paul Wheelhouse, Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands. Attendees received an update from the Ardrossan Steering Group and a vessel update from Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd. Discussion then focussed on next steps including proposed work landside and recommended interim works.

The Task Force will meet again in February to look at timings and progression of works.

MEETING WITH PAUL WHEELHOUSE, MINISTER FOR ENERGY, CONNECTIVITY AND THE ISLANDS, 12 January

On 12 January, together with my fellow Cabinet Member for Recovery and Renewal, Councillor Alex Gallagher, our Chief Executive, Craig Hatton and our Director for PLACE, Russell McCutcheon, I met with Paul Wheelhouse, Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands. The meeting follows correspondence with the Minister last June in which North Ayrshire Council asked for a bespoke “Islands Fund” and support for island economic recovery.

As previously outlined to the Minister specific support is required to support island inclusive and green economic recovery which would include support for short/medium-term recovery and resilience by focusing on place-based initiatives including circular economy, digital innovation, sustainability and inclusive economy. North Ayrshire Council has had regular meetings with stakeholders both on Arran and Cumbrae in relation to economic recovery and specifically with the Arran Recovery Group (ARG). High-profile issues raised include the following: the reliance on visitors to the island to support the viability of local economic and social infrastructure, with no visitors meaning the closure of most businesses (despite the island only being in Tier 3 pre-Christmas – with no Tier 4 business closure support), and a knock-on supply chain impact and impact on island wellbeing. The need for a considered approach to the allocation of islands to tiers is evident. Moreover, a route map or ‘recovery exit plan’ for island tourism and wider business infrastructure recovery needs consideration.

In response the Minister has cited the £30 million commitment within the Infrastructure Investment Plan to support the delivery of the National Islands Plan. However, there is no detail as yet, on the allocation of this and we will continue to engage with the Minister on the exact details of how this will be allocated.



COSLA LEADERS, 29 January

On 29 January COSLA Leaders met to discuss a range of topics which included reports on the Social Renewal Advisory Board, National Taskforce on Human Rights, Suicide Prevention Guidance, UK-EU Post Transition, COSLA Constitution and Participatory Budgeting.

North Ayrshire Council is working to mainstream participatory budgeting in its everyday business. The Council's approach to community empowerment is recognised by COSLA, the Local Governance Review Team and the Scottish Government as good practice and this was noted in the 2020 Best Value Audit Report.

Indeed, our Council has worked hard to sustain the mainstream participatory budgeting approach during the period of the pandemic. In 2019/20 the Council spent 1.4% of its budget using mainstream PB approaches. It was the only local authority in Scotland to exceed the 1% target. It is on track to spend £5,987,571, or 1.67% of its £357,928,000 budget with the involvement of local people in budgetary- decisions in 2020/21.

Ways in involving local people in setting the Council budget priorities and decisions have strengthened in the last two years through budget engagement programmes. Work continues to broaden ways of involving local people in deciding local spend and identifying which parts of service budgets, they have real influence over.

And of course, Leaders also had a finance update with the Scottish Government publishing its draft budget for 2021-22 the day before. It is worth highlighting that Council Leaders voted to express their disappointment in the settlement for Local Government as it failed to address any of COSLA's pre budget asks. In a year when we are fighting the Covid pandemic and the national pay negotiations are about to start, the budget does not provide the funding to cover such costs. The decision of Council Leaders means that COSLA will continue to lobby MSPs, of all parties, to try and secure a better deal for Scotland's Councils through the budget process in Parliament.

AYRSHIRE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD, 29 January

Following on from COSLA Leaders, I joined a meeting of the Ayrshire Economic Partnership Board (AEPB) on 29 January. It was another packed Agenda which covered the following topics:

- Food and Drink
- The Visitor Economy

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- Ayrshire Tourism Action Plan
- Space and Aerospace
- Clean Growth
- Digital workstream
- Skills
- COVID
- Ayrshire Wide Business Support
- Regional Business Support
- Community Wealth Building
- Ayrshire Growth Deal Programme Update
- Healthy Economic Project paper
- Strategic Transport Projects Review Update

The partnership is committed to ensuring that appropriate processes and procedures are in place to support the implementation of the Ayrshire Growth Deal and to maximise the benefit of this significant investment package. A comprehensive Governance document has been drafted which sets out the roles and responsibilities of partners and the processes for financial management, audit and change. Furthermore, the partnership will work with both Governments (UK and Scottish) to agree a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the Deal in addition to developing an approved Benefits Realisation Plan which will detail the realisation of benefits across the Programme, to bring focus and alignment to wider regional cohesion and economic development benefits achieved by utilising partner resources.

A permanent staffing structure is being put in place within the Programme Management Office for the Ayrshire Growth Deal and the team will be tasked to monitor, review and update the Ayrshire Growth Deal Programme Business Case.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Cullinane". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "J".

Councillor Joe Cullinane
Leader North Ayrshire Council