



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

LEADER'S REPORT

For the period covering: 2 November – 6
December 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.

LEADER'S REPORT

For the period covering: 2 November – 6 December 2020

FAIR SAY ENGAGEMENT SESSION, 2 November

On 2 October I took part in another “Fair Say” session together with the Council’s Chief Executive, Craig Hatton. These sessions provide the opportunity for Craig and me to answer any questions from North Ayrshire Council staff and to hear what is important to staff during this challenging time.

North Ayrshire Council staff have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic and have adapted quickly to working under ever changing circumstances. I could not be prouder of their efforts.

JOINT YOUTH CABINET, 3 November

I was delighted to take part in the first ever Joint Youth Cabinet session on 2 October using the Zoom platform. Together with my Cabinet members we were able to engage with an incredible 110 pupils representing all our schools throughout North Ayrshire. There was also representation by NAC senior officers, Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYP) and the Youth Council Executive. This is an incredible feat and took some organising.

The pandemic has affected us all and our young people have been particularly affected when it comes to education. They have had to adapt to online studying from home, cancellation of exams and the uncertainty of what the future holds for them. Therefore, it was important to hear their views and concerns as we look to rebuild and recover in the coming months. Pupils took part in conversations on a range of subjects including their community, digital connectivity, employability and health and wellbeing.

I am also delighted that our Youth Services team were successful in securing £120,000 in funding from the Youth Work Education Recovery Fund for youth projects in North Ayrshire. The first project will see young people partner up with the Council’s Youth Services team, the Health and Social Care Partnership and National Galleries to explore artist interventions that could be used in local communities to improve mental health and wellbeing. This was identified by young people themselves who feel pressure on mental wellbeing has been heightened by the current pandemic and lockdown. The remaining £60,000 will be targeted towards a number of smaller initiatives benefitting young people including:

- community-led learning programmes through the Beith Trust

- supportive outdoor learning experiences with the Arran Outdoor Centre
- sustainable food provision via Dalry Community Garden
- environmental projects with Barnardos and the Green Health Partnership
- mental health and wellbeing work in partnership with SeeMe
- enhanced family learning opportunities
- update Mobile Youth Centre for use as youth work hub across North Ayrshire

On behalf of my fellow Cabinet Members and myself, I would like to thank all those who took part and of course, all those involved in organising this incredible event. Well done.

ALCOHOL AND DRUGS PROJECT WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND TRUSTED PROFESSIONALS – LISTENING EVENT, 4 November

On 4 November I dropped into the Listening Event held by The Executive Youth Council from North Ayrshire. This event was a part of National Youth Week and provided the platform for key trusted professionals and young people from across North Ayrshire to discuss the themes and key messages they will be delivering in animated videos over the next two years. These videos will accompany a series of information blogs written by young people and together will look to impart knowledge to our young people on the effects of alcohol and drugs by increasing their awareness of both.

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING SUMMIT – PLURAL OWNERSHIP OF THE ECONOMY, 5 November

I was delighted to be asked by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies to speak at their Community Wealth Building Summit on 5 November on the subject of plural ownership of the Economy. The UK is the fifth most unequal country in the world, according to the OECD - 44% of the UK's wealth owned by just 10% of the population. At a local level, this means that the wealth generated by local people does not flow back to them, but instead is extracted by distant shareholders. Community Wealth Building seeks to promote locally owned and socially minded enterprises by promoting various models of enterprise ownership that enable wealth created by communities to be held by them, rather than flowing outwards.

Other Panel speakers included Deb Oxley OBE, Chief Executive, Employee Ownership Association, Isaac Stanley, Senior Researcher at CLES and Miriam Brett, Director of Research and Advocacy, Commonwealth who is also a member of the North Ayrshire Community Wealth Building Expert Panel.

BEITH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TRUST, 12 November

On 12 November, 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.

LIVING WAGE AND ANCHOR EVENT, 13 November

I am proud to lead a Council that has a long-standing commitment to fair work and one which is a Living Wage accredited employer. The new rate of £9.50 was announced on 9 November and this new rate will be applied to no less than 737 North Ayrshire Council employees starting from this date. On becoming Council Leader in 2016, it was one of my first objectives to ensure that we would begin to pay the new rate five months early, from the date of announcement. I believe that this is only fair and right to do so but more important now after the sacrifices of the key worker who have helped to keep us safe the past eight months.

As part of Living Wage Week, I was invited to speak at an online event hosted by Living Wage Scotland on 13 November. The event provided the platform for speakers to talk about the importance of anchor institutions adopting the real living wage within their individual organisations. I was pleased to give a presentation on the importance of the Living Wage within our Community Wealth Building strategy, in which Fair Employment is a key pillar. North Ayrshire Council is the biggest employer in North Ayrshire, NHS Ayrshire and Arran is the biggest employer across Ayrshire, and that gives us huge power to influence the local and regional labour market. We can use that influence to set the standard for pay and terms and conditions across the wider economy, as we are trying to do on the Living Wage.

FAIR SAY ENGAGEMENT SESSION, 18 November

On 18 November I took part in another "Fair Say" session together with the Council's Chief Executive, Craig Hatton. These sessions provide the opportunity for Craig and myself to answer any questions from North Ayrshire Council staff and hear what is important to staff during this challenging time.

LOCALITY BUDGET ENGAGEMENT SESSION, 18 November

Also on 18 November I took part in the first of our Locality Budget Engagement sessions with representatives from our Arran community and some of our officers. The Council is also about to launch our budget engagement for next year's budget. Whilst we will not find out what budget

the Scottish Government is giving us until the new year, the engagement will again enable local people to tell us what their priority service areas are.

I want to emphasise how much importance I place on local people participating in the Council's decision-making processes. I know that up and down the country there is a general feeling by communities that government, including local government, do not listen to their views. But we have been trying to take a different approach in North Ayrshire since I became Council Leader.

Whether it be putting the grounds maintenance budget out to participatory budgeting, creating our innovative Community Investment Fund or the vote we gave residents at the high-rise flats in Irvine and Saltcoats on future plans for the buildings, the Council I lead have shown that we will place power in the hands of local people.

I want to expand on these approaches to citizen participation, getting more residents involved in council decision-making and building greater trust between our communities and the Council. North Ayrshire Council will listen to the views of local people when it comes to making decisions. Other Locality Budget Engagement sessions have been arranged as follows:

- Kilwinning – 19 November
- Three Towns – 24 November
- North Coast – 26 November
- Garnock Valley – 1 December
- Irvine – 2 December

AYRSHIRE GROWTH DEAL SIGNING, 19 November

It was a memorable day for Ayrshire as Council Leaders from East, North and South Ayrshire, took part in an event with representatives from the Scottish and UK Governments, to finally sign the financial arrangements for the Ayrshire Growth Deal that will bring £251million of public investment to our region over the next decade or so.

The Growth Deal has been years in the making. It's been driven by the three Ayrshire Councils working together to bring the investment our region needs to give our economy a kickstart.

When you look at the projects within the Ayrshire Growth Deal you can see that we are positioning Ayrshire to be at the forefront of the changes we are going to see in the economy over the next few decades – specifically the urgent need to address the climate emergency and the rapid advancement in digital technology.

The Growth Deal will provide £53million of public investment in low carbon energy innovation and development. This will include £18million at Hunterston which, as Scotland's largest strategic deep-water port with direct rail and grid connection, is a site that has all the assets needed to contribute to Scotland's transition to a low carbon economy.

The digital projects within the Growth Deal will make Ayrshire a world-class region for digital connectivity. £11million will be invested for a subsea fibre optic cable that will land in Irvine. We are very fortunate that a national assessment of the best place to land such a cable in Scotland identified Irvine as the best location because these cables make an area very attractive for investment in the digital economy.

Capitalising on the subsea cable, and the fact that the i3 business park is Scotland's Life Science Enterprise Zone, a further £20million of investment at i3 will help deliver a National Digital Processing Hub which will facilitate research and development activity. It will also attract a range of supply chain companies and digital technology SMEs to the area as well as support new digital start-ups.

We will also be investing heavily to fulfil the potential of our greatest natural asset – the coast.

There is £10million in the Growth Deal for a new Marine Science and Environmental Centre at Ardrossan. The project will bring industry and academia together to ensure we are recognised as an exemplar in the Blue Economy and marine sustainability sector.

And £14million will be invested in the Great Harbour project at Irvine Harbourside to bring an additional one million visitors to the area each year, with the first phase "Maritime Mile", with its waterfront event spaces and floating boardwalk, helping to create a national visitor attraction.

It's not all capital projects within the Growth Deal, there is also a £8.5million Regional Skills and Inclusion Programme as well as a £3million Community Wealth Building Fund, investments that will ensure that the benefits of the deal are shared with the people and communities of Ayrshire.

We know we face immediate challenges but with the Ayrshire Growth Deal, and our Community Wealth Building work in North Ayrshire, our region can start to look forward to a brighter future for our regional economy over the coming decade with up to 7000 new jobs set to be created through the Growth Deal investments.

SPECIAL COSLA LEADERS MEETING, 20 November

COSLA Leaders met for a Special Leaders meeting on 20 November to discuss Scottish Government guidelines regarding Covid-10 and welfare funding for local authorities. Council Leaders will continue to engage with Scottish Government on a regular basis throughout the pandemic and to be kept informed of any changes and developments.

MEETING WITH THE CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR OF STRATHCLYDE PENSION FUND COMMITTEE, 23 November

On 23rd November I had a meeting with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Strathclyde Pension Fund committee to discuss Community Wealth Building and the role of the pension fund to invest locally to build local wealth. The discussion was positive with both sides keen to collaborate on a strategy that will invest in local infrastructure.

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING EXPERT PANEL, 25 November

On 25 November the Community Wealth Building Expert Panel met to hear how our CWB journey is progressing in North Ayrshire. The Panel also received a presentation from Rhona Arthur, Head of Service for Connected Communities at North Ayrshire Council and my colleague, Cabinet Member for Participatory Democracy, Councillor Louise McPhater about community empowerment throughout North Ayrshire and our participation journey.

The Panel also received a presentation from Caitriona McAuley, Head of Service for Economic Development, about our draft Regeneration Plan for North Ayrshire covering some of our key projects for Land and Assets.

I am grateful to the Panel for their feedback and of course, to our officers who continue to work and deliver as we progress on our CWB journey.

FU(TOUR) TOURISM IN AYRSHIRE 2021 EVENT, 26 November

On 26 November, together with my colleague, Cabinet member for Post Covid Recovery and Renewal, Councillor Alex Gallagher, I took part in a workshop entitled 'Fu(tour) Tourism in Ayrshire 2021'. The event was attended by representatives from East and South Ayrshire Councils together with an extensive list of potential partners from businesses and organisations such as Scotland Enterprise and VisitScotland, all of whom are committed to making Ayrshire a better place to live, work and visit.

The event provided the platform to hear new ways of engaging communities, businesses and organisations to deliver a more sustainable and appealing model for tourism. Post Covid we need to look at ways to transform Ayrshire for the benefit of our residents, businesses and of course the people who visit, plan to visit or even to invest in our region. Through Community Wealth Building and sustainable collaborative partnership working I hope we can look forward to our tourism sector recovering.

My thanks to Alastair Dobson, Chief Executive of Taste of Arran for organising the event.

COSLA LEADERS MEETING, 27 November

On 27 November COSLA Leaders met to discuss a packed Agenda which included the following items:

- White Ribbon Scotland Campaign
- Population Strategy
- Green Growth Accelerator

North Ayrshire Council has been supportive of the White Ribbon Scotland Campaign for numerous years now and will support it once again with our 16 Days End Violence against Women campaign starting on 25 November. This year it is more important than ever to highlight the support that is available to victims of domestic abuse given the lockdown and Tier level restrictions we have had. For some people, being at home with someone who is abusive can feel like the worst place to be in the world.

:

The Green Growth Accelerator aims to unlock £200 million of additional investment in infrastructure projects to support Scotland's transition to an inclusive, net-zero emissions economy. The Green Growth Accelerator was announced in the 2019-2020 Programme for Government and has featured in the 2020-2021 Programme for Government and the recent Advisory Group on Economic Recovery report 1. The GGA is built on the principles developed for the new Learning Estate and Investment Programme (LEIP) which itself builds on the existing growth accelerator initiative, a revenue finance model wherein a local authority commits to deliver defined, measurable outcomes that are enabled or underpinned by investment in infrastructure.

In North Ayrshire we have a robust Economic Recovery and Renewal Approach in our Green New Deal, Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy, all of which will contribute to NAC meeting its net zero carbon emissions target by 2030. It is hoped that any Government funding from this Green Growth Accelerator would be put towards these.

COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP BOARD, 2 December

On 2 December I chaired a meeting of Community Planning Partners where attendees received presentations and updates on the following:

- Employability and Skills
- The Kickstart Scheme
- The Ayrshire Growth Deal
- Cost of the School Day
- Updates from each of the Locality Partnerships
- Community Mental Health and Wellbeing presentation on projects and ideas to help young people
- Community Engagement Excellence report

The new Kickstart Fund is a new scheme to help young people in Scotland into work and spur Britain's economic revival launched by the UK Government. Under the scheme, employers can offer youngsters aged 16-24 who are claiming Universal Credit a six-month work placement.

The Government will fully fund each "Kickstart" job - paying 100% of the age-relevant National Minimum Wage, National Insurance and pension contributions for 25 hours a week.

Employers will be able to top up this wage, while the Government will also pay employers £1,500 to set up support and training for people on a Kickstart placement, as well as helping pay for uniforms and other set up costs.

The jobs will give young people – who are more likely to have been furloughed, with many working in sectors disproportionately hit by the pandemic - the opportunity to build their skills in the workplace and to gain experience to improve their chances of finding long-term work.

KILWINNING LOCALITY PARTNERSHIP MEETING, 3 December

On 3 December I attended a meeting of the Kilwinning Locality Partnership where attendees received presentations and updates on the following items:

- COVID update
- Cost of the School Day
- Community Support
- Locality Report
- HSCP update

- Grant/Participatory Budget update

My thanks to all officers for their updates and for their valuable contribution in keeping Kilwinning Members up to speed with North Ayrshire Council developments.

AYRSHIRE SHARED SERVICES COMMITTEE, 4 December

On 4 December I attended the Ayrshire Shared Services Committee meeting to discuss the Ayrshire Civil Contingencies Team (ACCT) Work Plan for 2020/2021. The plan provides an overview of the work undertaken to support the COVID19 pandemic response through the Ayrshire Local Resilience Partnership (ALRP).

FINALLY,

When I wrote my report for Council this time last year, I had no idea of what lay ahead in 2020. Looking back, it has been an extremely difficult year for all of us; it is almost surreal to think what we have come through. Everyone has been affected by the pandemic in some way or another. Many of our communities have endured job losses, reduction in income, loss of businesses and missed out on time with family and friends. Sadly for some there has been the devastating loss of loved ones.

We as a Council have learned to adapt to rapid changes to adhere to Government guidelines and look at new ways of working. We have achieved this and new ways of working have evolved.

Every year I thank Council staff for their hard work and dedication but this year they have gone over and beyond. On behalf of all the Elected Members here in North Ayrshire, I thank each and every one of you for continuing to deliver vital services and support to our communities under the most difficult circumstances. It has been truly incredible.

As 2020 draws to a close, I would like to wish you all a well deserved and much needed break over the festive period. Merry Christmas and here's hoping 2021 will bring happier times to us all.

LEADER'S REPORT



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joe Cullinane". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Councillor Joe Cullinane
Leader North Ayrshire Council