



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

LEADER'S REPORT

For the period covering: 3 February – 13
September 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: 3 February – 13 September 2020

VISIT TO ESOL, WALKER HALL, KILBIRNIE, 5 February

On 5 February, I was delighted to meet members of some of the Syrian families who have left their war-torn country and found new lives here in North Ayrshire. The event was hosted at an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) event in Walker Hall in Kilbirnie. I am hugely proud of the fact that North Ayrshire Council was one of the first Local Authorities in Scotland to resettle Syrian families, in total 41 families since the end of 2015.

Our North Ayrshire communities have welcomed our Syrian families and helped them to settle into our schools and places of work. These families are now contributing socially and economically to North Ayrshire and I look forward to building on that further as we continue to welcome more families over the coming months.

FAIR FOR ALL COMMISSIONER MEETING, 6 February

On 6 February, I attended the Fair For All Commissioner meeting held at Fullarton Connexions. There are now seven Community Commissioners who volunteer their time to attend the Fair For All Commission and are representative of communities that are struggling against poverty and insecurity. FFA Commissioners will continue to meet until May 2020 before a report will be submitted to the Scottish Government.

“THIS IS NORTH AYRSHIRE” PROMOTIONAL FILM AND LAUNCH, 7 February

I was pleased to attend the launch of our new, “This is North Ayrshire” promotional film and website for business and inward investment at the Harbour Arts Centre on 7 February. Both the film and the website have been positively received and we will continue to work closely with our partners and the local business community to promote North Ayrshire as a great place to do business. It is hoped that this new campaign will help attract new businesses and activity to the area.

POLICY ADVISORY PANEL, 13 February

I attended the Policy Advisory Panel on 13 February here in Cunninghame House where attendees heard a presentation on the budget update from our Executive Director for Finance and Corporate Support, Laura Friel.

SHARPHILL GROUNDBREAKING, 14 February

On 14 February I was delighted to attend Cunninghame Housing Association's groundbreaking ceremony at Sharphill in Dalry. North Ayrshire Council, Cunninghame Housing Association and the Scottish Government have been involved in developing this £12.3m housing project, which will deliver a total of 76 new homes, a mixture of 2, 3 and 4 bedroom houses with some cottage flats and houses designed specifically to meet the needs of wheelchair users.

The main contractor for the work is the local company, Ashleigh (Scotland) Ltd, who will continue to deliver some of our new house building projects in the coming years while at the same time delivering community wealth benefits to North Ayrshire, including offering Modern Apprenticeships to our young people and organising careers events in our secondary schools.

DALRYMPLE PLACE GROUNDBREAKING, 17 February

I attended our own groundbreaking ceremony at Dalrymple Place in Irvine on 17 February. This new project will continue the Council's ambitious affordable house building programme in North Ayrshire providing 33 new homes including sheltered housing and wheelchair liveable bungalows.

SCOTLAND EXCEL INCLUSIVE GROWTH CONFERENCE, 20 February

On the 20 February, I gave a presentation on Community Wealth Building at the Scotland Excel Inclusive Growth Conference at the Radisson Hotel in Glasgow. Over the past few months I have been asked to speak at various Conferences about Community Wealth Building, a key strategic and transformative piece of work which North Ayrshire Council has been leading on. Community Wealth Building has the potential to reconnect the local economy with economic and social justice, putting fair work at the heart of the local economy and supporting alternative, more inclusive forms of business ownership.

ARDROSSAN TASK FORCE MEETING, 25 February

I attended a meeting of the Ardrossan Task Force meeting at Atlantic Quay on the 25 February. The meeting was chaired by the Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands, Paul Wheelhouse. Attendees heard updates on the vessel including Marine Works, works landside, service continuity during construction, communications and engagement strategy, funding, governance and risks.

1st TIER JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE & CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY GROUP, 27 February

On 27 February, I chaired the 1st Tier Joint Consultative Committee and Corporate Health and Safety Group held in Cunninghame House. Attendees heard updates on the health and safety plans from our PLACE, Communities and HSCP directorates. There was also an update from the work of our Livewell team.

MODERN APPRENTICESHIP PRESENTATIONS, 2 March

Together with our Chief Executive, Craig Hatton, I was delighted to present some of our talented Modern Apprentices with presentations in recognition of some of the outstanding work they have been involved in since starting at North Ayrshire Council. The "Talent Without Limits" presentation took part on 2 March in Cunninghame House and I would like to congratulate all the winners but more importantly, acknowledge all the great work carried out by our Modern Apprentices.

FAIR FOR ALL ADVISORY PANEL, 11 March

On 11 March, I chaired the Fair For All Advisory Panel held here in Cunninghame House. Attendees heard several presentations and updates on some of our key pieces of work, one of which included an update on the GET HEARD sessions that were carried out by the Poverty Alliance throughout North Ayrshire. These findings will now be used and presented in a report to the Scottish Government in the next few months.

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING COMMISSION, 12 March

On 12 March, the Community Wealth Building (CWB) mission met for the third time to continue developing its plans for community wealth building in North Ayrshire. One of the five pillars of CWB includes procurement, and the Commission heard from our NAC Business Development

team on the progress that has been made around this so far. The Commission also saw the final draft of the CWB Strategy for North Ayrshire and the feedback on engagement.

Work will continue to develop and strengthen over the coming months and I am excited about the positive outcomes this work can have for the benefit of everyone in North Ayrshire.

CLIMATE CHANGE CONVENTION, 12 March

On 12 March, I was delighted to speak at our first Climate Change Convention at Saltcoats Town Hall. The event drew more than 100 attendees from a wide range of the community including schools, young people, community organisations, Elected Members and local businesses. Other speakers included, Kate Dapr , Chair of the Sustainability Network Scotland and Ellie Murtagh who works on the Adaptations Scotland Programme.



(Left to Right, Kate Dapr , Ellie Murtagh, Council Leader, Cllr Cullinane and David Hammond, North Ayrshire Council Head of Commercial Services)

North Ayrshire Council declared a Climate Emergency in June last year, committing to achieve 'net-zero' emissions by reducing these across the area by 2030. This means that there are only 10 years remaining to reduce and absorb emissions before climate change impacts become irreversible. We are one of many local authorities to have done this, but we have gone one step further and committed to achieving this ambitious goal by the year 2030 having set aside £8.8million in our budget to specifically target Climate Change, infrastructure and Community Wealth Building.

I would like to thank all those who took part in the event, the speakers, officers and attendees. The issues that were discussed at the roundtable discussions have been worthwhile and these will be looked at in more depth and incorporated into our next Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy (2020-23). This strategy will reflect the priorities of our young people, residents and businesses, and detail specific carbon reduction and absorption actions.

COVID-19 LOCKDOWN WORKING, 23 March

Obviously, this year has been unlike any other. Following the declaration on the 23 March by the Scottish Government that the country was to go into Lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, North Ayrshire Council acted swiftly and effectively to put in necessary measures for our workforce, Elected Members and communities, to keep them safe and informed on a regular basis. For many of our community, North Ayrshire Council was able to provide access to essential necessities like food and medicine that are needed to survive. I will say more at the end of the report and thank a range of people but I wanted to take the opportunity here to say how appreciative I am to our Chief Executive, Craig Hatton and his Executive Leadership Team, for their incredible work over the past few months. They have implemented crucial and necessary measures at such short notice. They have done this so effectively. It has been exemplary.

Following lockdown, all of us had to adapt to a new way of "normal" daily life, with many of us fortunate enough to be able to work from home. For other essential staff, this was not an option as they continued to provide many frontline essential services to our communities.

In the first instance, most of our Council and Committee meetings were cancelled but subsequently these have been reinstated using the power of technology. A new way of working has evolved. Virtual meetings have now become the norm and I have been impressed with the significant amount of work that has been achieved under these unique circumstances. Here are a few of the highlights since 23 March:

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING STRATEGY LAUNCH, 14 May

On 14 May I took part in the virtual launch of our Community Wealth Building strategy which was streamed live on the Council's Facebook page and reached an audience of over 11,000. Joining me was a great line-up of speakers including Matthew Brown, Leader of Preston Council, Neil McInroy, Centre for Local Economic Strategies, Sarah McKinley, The Democracy Collaborative and Donna Fitzpatrick, from the Fullarton Community Hub, Irvine.

I am proud to lead a council that has become the first in Scotland to adopt a radical economic strategy and one that will build back better, fairer and greener in the immediate future and post COVID-19. Community Wealth Building is about working in partnership with communities and businesses to build a strong local economy which supports fair work, encourages local spend and uses the land and property we own for the common good so that wealth stays local. We will achieve that by working together with our "anchor" organisations such as NHS Ayrshire and Arran, Ayrshire College and wider partners to support more local business to bid for public sector contracts. In addition, we will look to encourage businesses based in North Ayrshire to spend locally to support local supply chains and the recovery of our economy.

The current approach to the economy has left behind certain places and people and we must ensure that we have a recovery that is inclusive and tackles current inequalities. We also need to create an economy that is more resilient and sustainable, and ensure North Ayrshire is ready to deal with future challenges, including the Climate Emergency. We know that fragile regions like North Ayrshire and Ayrshire are hit hardest by economic shocks, so we must be prioritised for investment moving forward if we are serious about achieving an inclusive economy in Scotland.

An £8.8 million Investment Fund will support a series of Community Wealth Building projects, including the development of infrastructure to support business growth, with an emphasis also on climate change after the Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019.

The full Strategy can be viewed at **www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/cwb**

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING EXPERT ADVISORY PANEL, 20 May

In tandem with our CWB strategy, the Council has also set up an independent CWB Expert Advisory Panel whose primary remit will be to advise and challenge the wider CWB delivery of North Ayrshire and Ayrshire anchors participating in the CWB Commission. The Expert Panel held their first meeting on 20 May and includes the following members:



- **Sarah Deas**, Trustee, Wellbeing Economic Alliance (Scotland) and Visiting Professor, Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship, University of Strathclyde & Chair of Panel
- **Joe Guinan**, Vice President of Theory, Research, and Policy and Executive Director of The Next System Project, The Democracy Collaborative
- **Laurie Macfarlane**, Fellow, Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose, University College London (UCL) and Economics Editor, Open Democracy
- **Neil McInroy**, Chief Executive, Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES)
- **Sarah McKinley**, Director of European Programs and Next System Project European Representative, The Democracy Collaborative
- **Ian Mitchell**, Chief Executive, Community Enterprise in Scotland (CEIS)
- **Miriam Brett**, Director of Research and Advocacy, Common Wealth
- **Roz Foyer**, General Secretary of Scottish Trade Unions Congress (STUC)

The Panel have extensive knowledge on a range of subjects relating to the five pillars of CWB and can bring ideas and lessons from CWB best practice from elsewhere in the UK and internationally to share with our CWB Commission. I look forward to learning from them and using their wider policy knowledge on the wellbeing economy, fair work and climate change.

My thanks to the Panel for their support so far and commitment to help us going forward. And of course, a huge thanks to all the officers who have been working diligently on our CWB strategy over the past year.

AYRSHIRE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD MEETING & AYRSHIRE ECONOMIC JOINT COMMITTEE, 22 June

On 22 June I attended the Ayrshire Economic Partnership Board Meeting followed by the Ayrshire Economic Joint Committee where Board members heard presentations on Ayrshire-wide Business Recovery and Renewal and an update on the Ayrshire Growth Deal Programme.

Since the lockdown was initiated, a number of negative economic impacts have emerged in Scotland, which are likely to result in a deep recession. Latest estimates from the Scottish Government indicate a potential decrease of 33% in Scotland's GDP as a result of lockdown. There has also been a significant increase in unemployment levels, people claiming universal credit has increased and local businesses have had to close.

Support for local businesses has been an important element of the response of all three Ayrshire Councils and Scottish Enterprise to the pandemic. This support has been provided in conjunction with the Scottish Government, public sector partners and the local business communities, building on a well-established network of contacts and drawing upon a range of expertise to help protect and support businesses.

North Ayrshire Council's Business Support Team has engaged extensively with local businesses throughout the pandemic in a number of ways, including:

- Working with those businesses that remained operational, providing support and advice to enable compliance with Government requirements, assessing their ability to meet demand and maintain supply chains and future planning to enable continued response to the demands placed upon them by the pandemic.
- For those businesses that were subject to suspension, providing advice on grants and funding streams, supports to employees, assessing post-lockdown requirements and impact upon longer term plans and future viability.
- Identifying opportunities to diversify products and services to meet new and increased demands arising from the pandemic.

I would like to thank all the staff who were involved in providing timely financial support and guidance to local businesses and individuals over the past few months.

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING COMMISSION, 23 June

I chaired a meeting of the CWB Commission on 23 June. Attended by some of our "anchor" organisations, the Commission heard presentations on CWB Stakeholder mapping and Regeneration of Land and Assets. There was also discussion when I attended the Ayrshire Economic Partnership Board Meeting and at the Ayrshire Economic Joint Committee Board members heard presentations on Ayrshire-wide Business Recovery and Renewal and an update on the Ayrshire Growth Deal Programme.

ECONOMIC, REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD, 9 July

On 9 July the Economic, Regeneration and Development Board met, and Board members heard updates on the Ayrshire Growth Deal and the Ayrshire Regional Economic Strategy including its related programme of action. It was also agreed by Board members to bring the Board to an end. On behalf of North Ayrshire Council, I would like to thank the Board members for their invaluable contribution to North Ayrshire's economic development over the years. The Board has achieved a great deal, not least the success of our Team North Ayrshire which has been rightly viewed as a leading approach to business support across Scotland.

Some of the Board members will continue to work with us as we develop our new regional economic boards and commissions and I look forward to continuing to build on our existing working relationship as we face the unprecedented economic challenges from Covid-19 that lie ahead.

SUMMER RECESS COMMUNITY VISITS

Usually, over summer recess I like to take the opportunity to meet some of the community groups throughout North Ayrshire and find out more about some of the outstanding work they are doing throughout our communities. This year although unable to do physical visits, I was able to do “virtual” visits with some of our community hubs who have been at the forefront of providing food parcels, hot food, prescriptions, advice and a whole lot more to our North Ayrshire residents who needed it over the past few months. These visits included the following:

- Fullarton Community Hub (13 July)
- PRYDE in Kilwinning (16 July)
- Three Towns Community Hub (16 July)
- Kilwinning Community Hub (17 July)
- Cranberry Moss in Kilwinning (21 July)
- Irvine Community Hub (22 July)
- Arran Community Hub (22 July)
- North Coast Community Hub (4 August)

On some of the “virtual” visits, I was joined by our Chief Executive, Craig Hatton and on a few others, I was also accompanied by our Provost, Ian Clarkson.

The Covid-19 lockdown has been extremely challenging, but it has highlighted how powerful and resilient our communities are.

The efforts of Council staff, community groups and volunteers in responding to the crisis has been incredible. Within a short space of time, staff adapted to the situation and focused on supporting our most vulnerable residents. How they have worked together, in the face of adversity, has been inspiring.

These meetings are giving myself, senior officers and the Provost, the opportunity to personally thank the teams for their efforts and listen to the many incredible stories they have from the last few months. It has been a truly humbling experience, but I have been struck by some of the positives to have come out of it all. How Council staff and volunteers have learned about themselves as individuals. How they have adapted to form new and lasting bonds with each other and how they have recognised that their daily work has been making such a difference to

so many people's lives, in some cases, providing the lifeline to keep them going when at times it has been too much for some.

It is apparent to me that we need to use the energy and efforts of our staff and the volunteers to create a better normal after Covid because no one I have spoken to wants a return to the old normal. They have seen the difference that working together, across council departments and in partnership with community organisations, has made during lockdown and they don't want to lose that.

Going forward I am determined that our Council will build on the lessons learned from our shared working at these hubs and facilitate partnership working going forward.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE WELLBEING ECONOMIC ALLIANCE, 14 August

On 14 August, I am delighted to say that North Ayrshire Council became the first local authority in Scotland to join "The Wellbeing Economic Alliance (WEAll)". The Wellbeing Economic Alliance is a global organisation dedicated to developing 'wellbeing' economies with a focus on social justice and environmental change.

The catalyst for this has been the launch of our new Community Wealth Building Strategy and plans to build back better, fairer and greener as part of our economic recovery.

The Community Wealth Building approach is key for North Ayrshire in its bid to create a real wellbeing economy - an economic system purpose-built to deliver social justice on a healthy planet where humanity dictates economics, not the other way around. WEAll is a collaboration of organisations, alliances, movements and individuals working towards this goal.

Their Scottish hub, Wellbeing Alliance Scotland, was established in 2018 and brings together like-minded economic thinkers to coordinate strategic direction to help lead the way towards fundamental system change. Through participating in the WEAll network, the Council will inspire others to adopt similar pioneering approaches while benefiting from ideas and innovations from across the world

I look forward to speaking to a range of influential thinkers, like Sarah Deas, chair of North Ayrshire's expert advisory group on Community Wealth Building and a trustee of Wellbeing Economy Alliance (Scotland), who can help inspire us as we look to radically overhaul what we are doing here in North Ayrshire.

FAIR FOR ALL ADVISORY PANEL, 27 August

On 27 August, the Fair for All Advisory Panel met to hear updates on the Child Poverty Action Plan (CPAP), the Fair For All (FFA) Commission and our Food Forum. Our CPAP has now been reviewed by the Poverty and Inequality Commission and it has highlighted that employability and employment support, CPP focus, Fair For All Strategy and Fair For All Commission were all clear examples of good practice.

It is now three years since the formation of the Fair For All Commission which has enabled our Civic Commissioners to look at what is working, what is not and what people would like to see changed to tackle poverty going forward. This is information gathered from those who have first-hand experience of living in poverty, our Community Commissioners.

Our Food Forum continues to focus on ensuring the people of North Ayrshire can access safe, affordable and nourishing food. North Ayrshire Council is also in the process of establishing a Food Growing Strategy which will support the development of sustainable local food production which links into our local community food provision supporting our FFA strategy.

CEIS ANNUAL POLICY AND PRACTICE CONFERENCE, 2 September

Over the past few months I have been asked to talk about Community Wealth Building at several events, one of most recent ones was the Community Enterprise in Scotland (CEIS) Policy and Practice Conference held on 2 September.

I gave a summary of North Ayrshire Council's implementation of the strategy looking at how CWB can create opportunities for enterprising third sector organisations – social enterprises, co-operatives and community owned bodies. I also spoke about the concept of anchor organisations and the process of commissioning services.

My thanks again to Neil McInroy, Chief Executive at the Centre for Local and Economic Strategies (CLES), who also spoke at this event on CWB in general and used NAC as an example of what is being and can be done.

KILWINNING LOCALITY PARTNERSHIP MEETING, 3 September

I attended the Kilwinning Locality Partnership meeting on 3 September. Attendees heard a presentation on community support, an update on traffic and parking in the area and a further update on the Kilwinning Locality Plan. Superintendent Derek Frew advised that he would investigate further traffic issues which were causing some concerns on Kilwinning's Main Street.

COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP BOARD, 9 September

LEADER'S REPORT



On 9 September I Chaired a meeting of the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership Board meeting. Board members heard presentations on a range of subjects including the Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan, our Recovery and Renewal plan and a “state of the economy” update from our Head of Service, Caitriona McAuley.

Our Recovery and Renewal Paper has recently been approved by Cabinet and I am positive that the strategies outlined within this paper will be successful in building a better, fairer and greener North Ayrshire.

FINALLY

I have already commented above on the great work of our Council officers and volunteers throughout the past few months. I would like to once again, reiterate those sentiments and thank you all for the hard work, dedication and support you have given.

There is no award that could be bestowed on a Council that could encapsulate the gratitude and pride I have in leading one with such hard-working and dedicated staff; one which has communities that care for one another and hold each other up during hard times. To every one of you, please accept my sincerest thanks.



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joe Cullinane".

Councillor Joe Cullinane
Leader North Ayrshire Council