



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

LEADER'S REPORT

For the period covering: 31 May – 29 August
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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VISITS TO ARDROSSAN, 1 and 5 June

On 5 June I was invited by the Ardrossan Community Development Trust to attend the open day of the Ardrossan Community Fitness Centre. This followed on from a visit to Ardrossan South Beach earlier in the week to look at proposals for development of the area. Both are fantastic community initiatives which have been supported by grant funding from our Community Investment Fund.

The Ardrossan Community Development Trust is a membership organisation that has big ambitions for the town, and I am delighted that they have secured £250,000 of funding from the National Lottery to kickstart their vision for Ardrossan South Beach promenade. The £250,000 will allow the group to install additional play equipment at South Beach, which will be a great attraction for families looking to spend a day at our spectacular coast.

The second visit was to the new Ardrossan Community Sports Hub open day. The Ardrossan Community Sports Hub has brought the former Maximum Potential community gym assets and facilities, within the grounds of the Seafield School site, into community ownership to operate as a community gym. Back in January, my Cabinet awarded the group a £43,000 grant from our Community Investment Fund allowing them to create new jobs at the gym. It is a great facility and I am really pleased to hear that the open day was a huge success with many people becoming members of the gym on the day.

These are two great community initiatives in the one town but there are similar projects across the whole of North Ayrshire. Supporting these community-led projects is a key priority for me as Council Leader and features very heavily in our Community Wealth Building strategy. The Community Investment Fund has provided a source of funding that would not normally be provided by Councils but is a demonstration of the importance we place on empowering communities to deliver change. Such an approach is going to be a key part of our recovery from the pandemic.

VOLUNTEER'S WEEK AWARD CEREMONY, 7 June

It was a real privilege to take part in the Awards ceremony organised by The Ayrshire Community Trust (TACT) on 7 June and celebrate some of the outstanding work carried out by volunteers throughout North Ayrshire. It was really humbling to hear some of the amazing



stories and acts of kindness carried out by a special group of people. I was delighted to present the award to volunteers at North Ayrshire Women's Aid who have continued to operate and provide support during the pandemic. The organisation moved to the community hub building during the pandemic and implemented a covid contingency plan which has included a variety of changes for the volunteers. When in lockdown the volunteers were unable to be in the hub, instead they completed some training to facilitate peer support groups which are now available to women using the service. North Ayrshire Women's Aid have been a lifeline to many during the past 18 months and are worthy winners of this award.

COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP BOARD, 10 June

I Chaired a meeting of the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Board on 10 June. Attendees received presentations and updates on the following:

- Children's Services Strategic Partnership report
- Youth Participation and Citizenship Strategy
- Locality Priorities
- Fair for All Performance Report

Two workshop sessions were then held for partners to take part in. The first one entitled "Working North Ayrshire" was delivered by Skills Development Scotland and the second workshop, "Healthier North Ayrshire" was delivered by the North Ayrshire Drugs and Alcohol Partnership. Both workshops provided CPP partners with a greater understanding about these two areas of work. It also provided partners with an opportunity to identify areas where they can link in and support these areas of work going forward.

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING COMMISSION, 11 June

Our Community Wealth Building Commission met again on 11 June and received updates from Commission partners, the CWB Commission Lead Officers Working Group (LOWG), the procurement pillar workstream and an Ayrshire Growth Deal/Community Wealth Building Fund update.

Commission members also received an interesting presentation on the possible implementation of a CWB Act and how this could be designed to support delivery of CWB work throughout Ayrshire.



The idea of a CWB Act has been proposed in recent reports by Commonwealth and The Democracy Collaborative, two think tanks aiming to promote and embed Community Wealth Building and a more democratic economy. Following Ayrshire's leading role, it is hoped that such an Act would help to facilitate the implementation of CWB work in areas such as Fife, Inverclyde, South Lanarkshire and West Lothian.

My thanks to Miriam Brett, Director of Research & Advocacy for Commonwealth and Sarah McKinley, Director for European Programs for The Democracy Collaborative, for sharing this information with us and of course, their continued support on our CWB journey.

SCOTLAND EXCEL SUB AND JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING, 18 June

I attended a meeting of the Scotland Excel Executive Committee on 18 June. Attendees received an update on the Financial Audit report for 2020/21. Contracts for approval were also discussed covering delivery of Education materials, fostering and social care contracts and one for the treatment and disposal of organic waste.

Two submissions for membership of Scotland Excel were also approved, one from Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority and the other from Sportscotland.

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING EXPERT PANEL MEETING, 21 June

The Community Wealth Building Expert Panel met on 21 June to hear updates on our CWB progress and to provide valuable feedback on our draft CWB annual report.

I am proud of the work contained in the draft report which marks the first year of embarking on a bold new economic model to deliver Scotland's first Community Wealth Building strategy. The strategy was launched during the Covid-19 global pandemic, with unprecedented impacts on population health, the economy and society. The impacts on North Ayrshire have been severe and has thrown into sharp relief the need to focus on creating an economy that is more diverse, sustainable and resilient to future challenges, such as the Climate Emergency.

As we emerge from the pandemic, it is clear that we cannot return to business as usual, and we must build back an economy which is better, fairer and greener. Using our Community Wealth Building strategy as a framework, we will support our existing businesses and social enterprises to rebuild, diversify and become more resilient, green and inclusive. We will support our communities who have lost their jobs or are in insecure work and encourage community entrepreneurship. This report reflects on the first year of delivering the strategy – amidst the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic – and highlights key achievements, progress and examples of how our changes and support have impacted positively on our communities and businesses.



My thanks again to our CWB Expert Panel members for their valuable input and feedback on our CWB strategy and their continued support to North Ayrshire Council.

VISIT TO LOCKHART CAMPUS, 22 June

On 22 June I was delighted to get the opportunity along with our Chief Executive, Craig Hatton, to visit Lockhart Campus, North Ayrshire Council's new Additional Support Needs (ASN) school that will open to pupils in August. It is truly a stunning, state-of-the-art school that is going to transform the education of children and young people with additional support needs across North Ayrshire. Every detail has been thought through from the flexible classroom spaces, the sensory rooms, indoor soft play, swimming and hydrotherapy pools through to the amazing outdoor spaces.

I am proud of the investment North Ayrshire Council has made in Lockhart Campus. It is a special project that is going to ensure children and young people with additional support needs get the best education possible in the best of educational environments. The £20million plus school, alongside the £5million investment in the respite centres situated next door (the equally stunning Red Rose House and Roslin House), has been fully funded by the Council and is part of over £100million of investment to improve the school estate that my administration are making.

COSLA SPECIAL LEADERS MEETING, 24 June

I attended a Special COSLA Leaders meeting on 24 June to discuss strategic financial issues facing Local Government including council tax and pay issues.

COSLA LEADERS MEETING, 25 June

There was a further COSLA Leaders meeting held on 25 June to discuss a packed Agenda with discussion points such as:

- The Promise
- Employability – Phase 2 of No One Left Behind
- COSLA and IS Partnership Working
- Scottish Local Government Conduct Order 2021 – Consultation
- Digital Citizenship Guide for Councillors – Civility in Public Life
- Christie Commission – 10 years on

No One Left Behind (NOLB) is a key strand of funding North Ayrshire Council receives to deliver employability services specifically targeting those most disadvantaged in the labour market. From April 2022 additional funding will be incorporated into NOLB in the form of two



national programmes, Community Jobs Scotland and Employability fund. This transition of funding to NOLB will mean a significant increase in funding for employability services in North Ayrshire.

RACKIT PHOTO CALL, 15 July

On 15 July I was delighted to meet with some of the employers at Rackit, a local business success story. The company was established in 2006 and provides its customers, who range from small office-based businesses to multinational global giants, with solid and innovative storage and handling solutions. In recent years the company has grown significantly from a £1 million business in 2012, to £6.5 million in 2021.

With a company motto of 'think global, act local', they are a local business that share much of our ethos of Community Wealth Building with a commitment to providing living wage jobs for local people including apprenticeships in IT, warehousing, purchasing and supply chain. The move to the Gateway Building at i3 will see Rackit increase their business space tenfold increasing from their current 3,500 square feet premises to the 35,000 square feet that the Gateway Building offers. This expansion will allow the company to create a further 40 jobs by the end of next year.

Rackit's move is a great example of the investment the Council is making to build new commercial business space at i3. We know that there is demand for commercial units in North Ayrshire that will not be met if it is left to "the market" to build them because construction costs are often higher than the end "market value" of the units due to "market failure" in the North Ayrshire economy. If the units aren't built, then the local economy is held back even further as businesses like Rackit are either held back or forced to move elsewhere to grow. That's why it is vital that the Council is intervening where "the market" won't, investing in new commercial units to support local businesses and create jobs. The units are retained in Council ownership and then generate a rental income for the Council going forward.

I wish the company continued success for the future.

COSLA SPECIAL LEADERS MEETING, 30 July

COSLA Leaders met again on 30 July to continue discussions around pay negotiations for Local Government employees. Other agenda items included:

- Revised Engagement Protocol for COVID-19 Decision Making
- Support for Destitute People with No Recourse to Public Funds
- Play Park Renewal Update
- Community Planning Improvement Board



- Partnership Delivery Framework for ADPs

Highlights from the Community Planning Improvement Board (CPIB) paper outline the successes of Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) during the pandemic, drawn from research by The Improvement Service and includes details of the work of North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership (CPP) and the community hubs.

I am proud to say that North Ayrshire Council is noted for its sector-leading work in Community Planning and the strength of its local CPP which was noted in the 2020 Best Value Audit Report.

FUNDING BOOST FOR 1ST ALLIANCE CREDIT UNION, 12 August

On 12 August I was delighted to visit the 1st Alliance Credit Union in Kilwinning to meet with Carol McHarg, CEO of 1st Alliance to announce the £150K that North Ayrshire Council will give to help meet the needs of the most vulnerable who have been financially disadvantaged because of the pandemic.

Supporting vulnerable families, citizens and communities in North Ayrshire, the Access to Finance Fund will be available via Kilwinning's 1st Alliance Credit Union. With many seeing a sharp decline in their income due to furlough or periods of unemployment throughout the pandemic, members who would have otherwise been able to apply for personal loans have not met the current lending criteria.

This funding is a great example of Community Wealth Building in action, a pledge that we have made as a Council to invest in and support businesses in the local economy, in particular to back co-operative ownership models such as credit unions. It is our commitment to continue to help alleviate the stress and worry low-income households have faced because of the pandemic and we would encourage anyone who is experiencing financial difficulties to seek safe and affordable credit options from trusted lenders.

VISIT TO EARLY YEARS AND SCHOOLS, 16 & 17 August

It was great to go along and visit some of our recently refurbished early years establishments on 16 and 17 August at St Bridget's in Kilbirnie, Beith and Springside and Annick in Irvine.

The £5.4m refurbishments and extensions include large, modern indoor and outdoor play areas with free-flowing access to the innovative outdoor spaces. The unrestricted flow from indoor to outdoor offers the children the freedom to safely access and use both areas where high quality learning experiences are available for all.

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North Ayrshire Council's ELC capital programme has 42 projects, including 27 refurbishments, 14 extensions, and one new-build provision. The Council plans will create additional capacity in our existing school estate, upgrading facilities at Kilwinning Academy, Irvine Royal, Auchendarvie and providing the much-needed extension to Annick Primary School.

I am proud to lead a Council that is tackling inequality and I believe that a big part of that is through education. I am confident that the transformational nature of our investment in schools will have a long-term positive impact in closing the poverty-related attainment gap, but schools and education cannot be viewed in isolation from everything else. Children spend more time outside the classroom than they do inside it, so if we are to tackle the attainment gap, we must support families outside of school too. That's what we are doing with our council house building programme, our Community Wealth Building approach and initiatives such as our Cost of the School Day programme and the ever-growing Fairer Food Network. Considered altogether, the work we are doing as a Council is a catalyst for real change which can finally shift the dial on the inequality that has plagued our area for too long.

FUSION ARDEER ENGAGEMENT EVENT, 17 August

On 17 August I attended a briefing with fellow Elected members, community representatives and senior officers to hear more about a bid submitted by North Ayrshire Council for Ardeer to be considered by the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) and the UK Government as a location for a prototype fusion power station known as STEP (Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production).

University of Glasgow School of Physics and Astronomy developed the nomination, based on the University's expertise and interest in the field, their understanding of the requirements of the site, and the identified skills base. They worked with Glasgow City Council, and landowners NPL as a consortium to develop the bid, with advice from Scottish Enterprise.

Attendees were informed about the overall project, the selection process, and at what stage the process is at currently. I am pleased to say that the briefing was well attended, generating much interest and several questions on the technology, the project impacts, and the process for site selection.

Site shortlisting is expected late August-early September 2021. A final three sites will be selected by end 2021 and will be scrutinised during 2022. UKAEA will make recommendations to the UK Minister in summer 2022 with a final site decision to be taken by the end of 2022.

VISIT TO KILWINNING RANGERS' HUB, 17 August

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It was great to get along and visit the new hub at Kilwinning Rangers on 17 August and see some of the work that has taken place using the monies awarded from our Community Investment Fund (CIF), totalling just under £57k. The new additional space will provide much-needed room for the Club's players and update changing facilities. It is when I see projects like this, I can see the positive impact that our CIF funding is making to our communities throughout North Ayrshire.

SCOTLAND EXCEL SUB COMMITTEE MEETING, 20 August

I attended a Sub Committee meeting of Scotland Excel on 20 August. Attendees were updated on the following:

- Chief Executive's Update report
- Digital update (including analysis of software systems used across Councils with most now using STAMP – Scotland's Technical Asset Management Platform)
- Care Services
- Scotland Excel Academy
- Housing Update (with a further 4 new Housing Associations have becoming associated members of Scotland Excel)
- Updates on Local Authority projects, including Community wealth building projects by East Lothian Council and Stirling Council

I am pleased to hear that Scotland Excel are working in partnership with the Scottish Government to develop Community Wealth Building practices across local government.

DIGITAL PROCESSING MANUFACTURING CENTRE LAUNCH, 25 August

On 25 August I was delighted to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with partners University of Strathclyde (as the operator of the National Manufacturing Institute Scotland (NMIS)) and the Centre for Process Innovation (CPI). The partnership will help future proof key process manufacturing industries, such as pharmaceuticals, food and drink and chemical products.

It brings together two of the UK's seven High Value Manufacturing Catapult centres, NMIS and CPI, to further bolster the support for UK manufacturing and they have big ambitions for the future, working together on proposals to further support the sector in their journey towards digital transformation. These proposals include the potential development of a dedicated research centre in the Ayrshire area.



As part of our Community Wealth Building strategy, we are keen to expand our anchor institutions in the area, and this new partnership will be another one which will improve the area's access to academic institutions to stimulate research and innovation.

North Ayrshire has always had a higher-than-average proportion of manufacturing jobs so therefore it is crucial for us to address concerns over regional decline through initiatives such as this. It will also have the future potential for sustainable employment opportunities for our young people.

VISIT TO KILWINNING FOOTBALL ACADEMY, 26 August

On 26 August, I dropped into chat with volunteers/staff about another project that has benefitted from our Community Investment Funding, Kilwinning Football Academy. The club uses physical activity and football to engage and inspire people to build a better life for themselves and unite the communities in which they live. Dedicated staff deliver football coaching, educational programmes and personal development, providing people with opportunities to change their lives for the better.

The plan is that the money will be spent in updating the surface at Almswell park and creating a more welcoming environment. By redeveloping Almswall, and specifically the playing surface, it will allow the facility to align with specific entry criteria into the Scottish Woman's Premier League 1 & 2. The criteria also include covered terracing and videography stands for filming games etc. This is the first phase of the Almswall Park redevelopment and in due course the club will look to redevelop the pavilion and car park area. Exciting times ahead for the club and the people of Kilwinning.



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

Councillor Joe Cullinane
Leader North Ayrshire Council

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