



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

LEADER'S REPORT

For the period covering: 29 November – 6
February 2022

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 JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE, 29 November

On 29 November I attended a meeting of the Ayrshire Joint Economic Committee to hear updates on the Ayrshire Regional Economic strategy and on the Ayrshire Growth Deal. Attendees also received an update on awards from the Community Renewal Fund and UK Government Levelling Up Fund. This of course includes North Ayrshire Council's successful bid to the Levelling Up fund to upgrade the B714. This will deliver £23.7million in addition to the £3million of Council funding we set aside for the project back in June 2021 allowing us to move on to the next stages of the project which will include the design phase.

COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP BOARD, 2 December

I was pleased to chair a meeting of the Community Planning Partnership Board on 2 December. Attendees received updates on the progress of the Local Improvement Outcome Plan (LOIP) and a report on the update received from the Community Planning Improvement Board. Board members then joined workshops one of which was delivered by Ian McMeekin from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service about the new smoke alarms Scottish Government legislation which comes into effect in February. Ian spoke specifically about support being given to elderly and vulnerable people.

I would like to thank all our Partners for their collaborative working the past year and look forward to working with them again in the new year.

HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS REGIONAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP MEETING, 3 December

On 3 December I attended the first meeting of the recently established Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership. Discussion focused primarily on the National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET) and what are anticipated to be the next steps in the process. The NSET is the Scottish Government's refreshed 10-year strategy which will aim to transform the Scottish economy by prioritising investment in the industries of the future to deliver new, green jobs.



KILWINNING LOCALITY MEETING, 6 December

I attended a Kilwinning Locality meeting on 6 December. Updates were received on Grants, The Ayrshire Community Trust Adult Volunteering Recognition Awards, learning update from local Head Teachers, an HSCP update, new fire legislation (smoke alarms), Kilwinning Youth Forum and an update on the locality plan.

There was also a Community Investment bid made by Corsehill Primary school Parent Council for £50,000 to be made available to build a play park in the Corsehill area.

ARDROSSAN TASKFORCE MEETING, 7 December

On 7 December I attended a meeting of the Ardrossan Task Force where attendees received updates from the Ardrossan Steering Group on legal and commercial arrangements and the technical subgroups. There was also an update on the Vessel and the Troon infrastructure project.

The next meeting will be held on 23 February.

COSLA SPECIAL LEADERS MEETING, 10 December

Also, on 10 December I attended a COSLA Special Leaders meeting to discuss the Local Government budget on offer. At that meeting I proposed a Labour motion that Councils "cannot accept" the SNP-Green budget being offered. I am pleased to say that all 32 Council Leaders in Scotland backed the motion.

I will reiterate my comments from that meeting here. There is no doubt that this is an appalling budget for local Councils. It is a real-terms cut to our budget and comes after more than a decade of cuts. Councils are seeing costs rising, on top of an increase in National Insurance and a rise in the cost of living, while at the same time Councils are having more demands placed on them from Scottish Government decisions made in Edinburgh - but we are receiving no funding to cover them. There is no funding in this budget to provide a fair pay deal for local government workers so again Councils are being asked to cut local services, to cut local jobs, to fund a pay award for our staff.

The budget is simply not acceptable and it will be our communities who will suffer as we struggle to fund our schools, social care, community facilities and maintain our local infrastructure with reduced funds.



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COSLA SPECIAL LEADERS MEETING, 15 December

I attended another COSLA Special Leaders meeting on 15 December to receive an update on developments relating to COVID-19 more specifically with respect to the emergence of the Omicron variant. The Deputy First Minister John Swinney attended the meeting to outline the likely implications for local government and to answer questions on the current situation and the potential impacts of Omicron in Scotland.

COSLA SPECIAL LEADERS MEETING, 21 December

On 21 December there was a further COSLA Special Leaders meeting to further discuss the Local Budget settlement and strategy going forward. There was also an update on a £66million fund by the Scottish Government to be distributed to Councils to help hospitality businesses affected by the restrictions implemented because of the Omicron variant.

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING COMMISSION, 11 January

I chaired a meeting of the Community Wealth Building Commission on 11 January where attendees received updates on the progress of the Ayrshire Anchor Charter and on progress of the various workstreams from the Lead Officer Working Group (LOWG) meeting held in November. There was a particular focus on the Fair Employment workstream which Ayrshire College is taking the lead on. It was noted that there is an interest in focusing on improving recruitment practices within Anchors to ensure recruitment is inclusive and accessible to all.

The Commission will meet again on 17 March where we will be joined by the Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth, Tom Arthur MSP.

COSLA SPECIAL LEADERS MEETING, 14 January

On 14 January I attended a COSLA Special Leaders meeting to discuss the following items

- Local Government Settlement
- Grant funding to hospitality sector



- Prioritisation of Social Care

Following on from the Leaders meeting on 21 December, where it was agreed that Local Government would deliver a £66m December 2021 top-up fund for hospitality businesses, it was announced that the Scottish Government would be providing a Business Support Hospitality & Leisure top-up of £32m to be delivered in January 2022.

NORTHERN IRELAND DEVELOPMENT TRUST EVENT, 19 January

I was delighted to speak at a Northern Ireland Development Trust virtual event, facilitated by Trademark Belfast, on 19 January about Community Wealth Building and, in particular, our journey here in North Ayrshire to be the first CWB Local Authority in Scotland. I spoke about how CWB incorporates Fair Employment and how it is beneficial to have a local workforce.

LOCALITY BUDGET ENGAGEMENT EVENT, 20 January

Together with our Chief Executive, Craig Hatton, I hosted a Locality Budget event on 20 January. The session enabled our contacts throughout our localities to hear where our money last year has been spent and our journey through the pandemic. It also provided an opportunity for attendees to tell us where they think money should be prioritised in the forthcoming year.

STEP PROJECT INDUSTRY AND MEDIA BRIEFING, 21 January

On 21 January I attended two separate briefing events on the new Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production (STEP) Ardeer site bid, one with local businesses and one with the media. Ardeer remains the only Scottish site in the running to host a prototype fusion energy plant along with another four sites in England. STEP is a UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) programme which has the possibility of delivering a source of low-carbon and clean energy which is enough to supply our National Grid. If successful, this would bring investment to our region and create jobs for the future.

We should receive a final decision on whether we have been successful towards the end of the year.

STEP PROJECT – LUNCH WITH STAKEHOLDERS, 25 January

On 25 January I attended a lunch with a visiting delegation from the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) together with other stakeholders including NPL and Glasgow University. This followed on from a site visit to Ardeer where the UKAEA team were taken round the site

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by our Head of Economic Development, Caitriona McAuley and other senior officers. The UKAEA team were able to talk more about the STEP programme and the energy it provides.

This is an exciting time for North Ayrshire and for Scotland. I would like to thank Caitriona and her team for all their hard work on this landmark project.

STEP PUBLIC WEBINAR, 26 January

On 26 January I attended a public webinar providing information on the Ardeer STEP bid. Hosted by the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA), the event provided members of the public the opportunity to ask questions on the project.

COSLA LEADERS, 28 January

I attended a meeting of COSLA Leaders on 28 January. Agenda items included:

- Local Elections
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- Local Government Finance
- Employability Update
- Review of UK Fiscal Framework
- National Care Service Update
- National Care Home Contract Negotiations
- Whole Family Wellbeing Fund
- Enhanced Easter Study Support for Senior Phase Learners

POLICY ADVISORY PANEL MEETING, 3 February

On 3 February I attended a meeting of the Policy Advisory Panel where attendees received reports on Community Wealth Building (CWB) Advertising and Sponsorship Framework and also on a Memorial Tree initiative.

My Cabinet approved a Roundabout Advertising pilot in 2019 and Floral Bed Sponsorship earlier in 2021 to provide promotion and recognition opportunities for local businesses and deliver new income generation streams to the Council. The roundabout project has proved to be extremely successful with all available locations being taken by local businesses within a week of becoming available. It is anticipated the floral bed sponsorship project will be similarly successful when fully rolled out in 2022. As part of ongoing efforts to drive forward the CWB agenda, further advertising and sponsorship opportunities have emerged aligned to the CWB 'land and assets' pillar for local businesses to provide cost-effective and local opportunities to increase their

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business profile, make a contribution to their recovery strategies and establish innovative and sustainable income generation business models that can be reinvested in local services.



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

Councillor Joe Cullinane
Leader North Ayrshire Council