



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

LEADER'S REPORT

For the period covering: 5 October -13 December
2017

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: 5 October -13 December 2017

COSLA ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND EXCELLENCE AWARDS, 5-7 October

On the 6th and 7th of October I attended the COSLA Annual Conference and Excellence Awards at the Crieff Hydro in Perth along with Councillors Bell, Burns and Marshall. North Ayrshire Council were shortlisted in two categories. I'm delighted that we were winners in both, with "Café Solace" successful in the "Tackling Inequalities and Improving Health" category and the Youth Empowerment team winning the award in the "Strong and Sustainable Communities" category.

Both worthy winners and fine examples of community and youth empowerment. Congratulations to both of them.

ENGAGE, DEVELOP, GROW BUSINESS EVENT, 11 October

I was invited by Team North Ayrshire to open the "Engage, Develop and Grow Business" event at Ayrshire College (Kilwinning Campus) on the 11th October. The event provided a platform for local businesses to speak about why it was worth investing in their workforce by offering training and opportunities for them to develop their skill set. Employees were also able to share with others their skills journey. I am confident that the businesses and employers who attended were inspired by hearing how other employers such as James Frew, Ashleigh Construction and GE Caledonian have benefitted from investing in their people. These employers have also had access to support enabling them to engage better with schools and colleges, invest in the development of their workforce through Modern Apprenticeships and support sustainable growth through their people with leadership and management training.

SKILLS FOR LIFE, GRADUATION EVENT, 12 October

I was delighted to be invited along to the Skills for Life Graduation Event on the 12th October which saw 25 students celebrate their achievements after completing an intensive 6 week training course at Ayrshire College. The course is aimed at providing support to those who have been affected by long term unemployment, in this case many of them lone parents who have faced many barriers when trying to get back into the workforce, such as childcare issues, lack of confidence, money management and well-being.



The course not only prepares them with the skills to enter into employment again but also helped them to gain 4 SVQ level 4 qualifications. I am pleased to report that all of them have secured employment or college place; some in Council services or in the private sector and some have gone on to further education.

This has been a life changing experience for the participants and it is encouraging to know that more students will be able to benefit from this programme when the next Skills for Life schedule begins in January 2018.

CHALLENGE POVERTY WEEK, 15-21 October

North Ayrshire Council played an instrumental role in supporting Challenge Poverty Week (15th – 21st October) with a series of events and visits aimed at challenging poverty in all its forms and promoting the work that is being done across North Ayrshire to tackle it.

The week kicked off with the “Aye we Can” challenge poverty conference held in the Fullarton Community Hub. More than 100 people attended to hear from our Chief Executive, Elma Murray about the Council's commitment to be “Fair For All”, and Peter Kelly from the Poverty Alliance spoke about finding solutions to tackle poverty. Other speakers included Donna Fitzpatrick, Chair of the Fullarton Community Association and Zoe Ferguson from the Carnegie UK Trust. The Conference provided everyone with the chance to hear what the Council, partners and other organisations are doing to help and support our local communities.



Later that afternoon I was pleased to take part in the launch of the “Better off North Ayrshire” service. This new service which is part funded by the European Social Fund and Big Lottery Fund Scotland provides a one stop service aimed at those on low incomes or out of work and enables them to access information on how to improve their financial circumstances.



Launch of “Better Off North Ayrshire” at The Playz in Kilwinning.

“Better off North Ayrshire” roadshow at Tesco supermarket in Kilbirnie.



On Wednesday the 11th October the Fullarton Employability Hub was officially opened. This is the fourth Employability hub to open in North Ayrshire (others are in Stevenston, Ardrossan and Kilbirnie) and will provide a range of facilities to help those looking to find employment as well as offering training and workshops aimed at helping them develop their skills.

These were just some of the events held during the week but others included joint visits with the Provost to Café Solace in Irvine and Café Solace in Ardrossan, Better off North Ayrshire roadshows in Kilbirnie and Ardrossan and a visit to Cunninghame Furniture Recycling Company who are providing recycled and new furniture and white goods at affordable prices for those on a budget.

The week was rounded off on Friday with a visit to Hayocks Primary school in Stevenston to see the youngsters enjoying activities as part of the Holiday meals initiative, an initiative that continues to go from strength to strength.

CARE EXPERIENCED AWARDS, 24 October

Along with Councillor Robert Foster and Stephen Brown (Interim Director for Health and Social Care) I was invited along to celebrate the successes of Care Leavers at Ayrshire College on the 24th October. The event was a collaboration between NAHCP Throughcare Team and Ayrshire College and takes place during National Care Leaver's Week.

This is the second time that this event has been held, with the aim of giving young people information and support on a range of subjects including training opportunities offered by the

LEADER'S REPORT



Prince's Trust and Redburn Centre as well as providing advice on drug and alcohol abuse, smoking cessation and services available from Women's Aid.

I was privileged to meet with some of the young people who received certificates acknowledging their achievements in training, education and employment. I am hugely proud of the steps they are taking and wish them every success for the future.

COSLA LEADERS, 27 October

I attended COSLA Leaders on the 27th October where there was discussion on a range of subjects including Community Choices (Participatory Budgeting) for 2020/21 and Welfare Reform.

Leaders agreed to endorse the framework outlined for the 1% of local government budgets to form part of Participatory Budgeting from 2020/21 and also agreed to the appointment of a COSLA Participatory Budgeting Development Manager.

Following discussion on welfare reform, it was unanimously agreed by Leaders, that the COSLA President would write on behalf of Scottish Local Government Leaders, to David Gauke MP, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, calling on the UK Government to acknowledge the wishes of the UK Parliament, Scottish Parliament and Scottish Local Government that the roll out of the full universal credit service should be paused until effective improvements were put in place.

BUILDING STRONG COMMUNITIES THROUGH PARTNERSHIP AND PLACE CONFERENCE, 31 October

North Ayrshire was pleased to welcome a delegation from Mid and East Antrim Council on the 31st October who joined us to observe our community partners in action at the Saltcoats Town Hall.

The Conference entitled "building stronger communities through Partnership and Place" was run in conjunction with the Improvement Service and provided a platform for us to detail our locality planning journey from initial stages of engagement to partnership. Discussion focused on the development of locality planning throughout North Ayrshire and how the PLACE Standard tool has contributed to the success of locality planning as a whole.

ARDROSSAN ACADEMY, 2 November

I was delighted to be asked to do a Q&A session with Modern Studies pupils at Ardrossan Academy. The questions were challenging and I just hope the answers were equally as clear.

LAUNCH OF GLOW, 2 November

Later on the 2nd November I attended the launch of 'Glow' at Irvine Royal Academy. Glow is a new online resource available to young people and staff in our schools to provide information about mental health. I hope that pupils and staff are able to use the resource to help tackle this important issue.

NORTH AYRSHIRE ACHIEVES, 3 November

On the 3rd November I was invited to celebrate the achievements made by NAC staff throughout the year at the North Ayrshire Achieves. This Programme recognises those members of staff who go the extra mile and who make a real difference to the workplace and the wider community through their hard work and dedication.

North Ayrshire Council is a Council defined by excellent and innovative services. Our staff help to achieve this through the high standard of service they provide, their commitment to the job and their positive attitudes when working with our residents and customers.

I'd like to congratulate all those nominated, the finalists and the winners in the 9 separate categories. A special thanks also to the singers from the NAC Workplace Choir who opened the night's proceedings with a wonderful performance.

LIVING WAGE WEEK, 5-11 November

To celebrate Living Wage Week 2017 (5-11 November), I was pleased to announce that North Ayrshire Council, already an accredited Living Wage Employer, would begin to pay the new rate of £8.75 per hour to NAC staff from the date of announcement, this is 4 months ahead of schedule.

I also took the opportunity to visit some of the local companies who are proud to call themselves an accredited Living Wage employer. I would like to thank all the companies throughout North Ayrshire who see the benefits in paying the living wage to their staff and comprehend that in doing this they are making a positive difference not only to their business and staff but to the wider community.

I would urge any North Ayrshire employer who has not signed up yet to be an accredited Living Wage employer to give it their consideration and play a part in creating a fairer society for all.



Elma Murray, Council Leader and Jack Evans from Poverty

LAUNCH OF THE MENTAL HEALTH TOOLKIT, 10 November

On the 10th November I was invited to attend the launch of the mental health toolkit at Ardeer Community Centre. I am beyond delighted to see the culmination of Courtney Gemmell's hard work and passion for helping others with mental health issues, result in the launch of such an important resource to be used in our schools, children's units and colleges.

My thanks to the Youth Services team and of course, to Courtney herself for helping to change the lives of so many other young people throughout North Ayrshire.

ROBERT SERVICE COURT SHELTERED HOUSING OPENING, 14 November

On the 14th November, together with other Elected Members and Provost Clarkson, I attended the launch of the newly refurbished Robert Service Court Sheltered Housing Unit in Kilwinning.

This project will see the residents of Robert Service Court enjoy the benefits of living in fully accessible homes. The Council remains fully committed in delivering suitable housing to meet the needs and demands of our local residents.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank James Frew Ltd, the local contractor responsible for the project for their outstanding work but also for their Modern Apprenticeship programme that gives young people the opportunity to earn while they learn. A shining example of a local employer giving back to the local community.

COSLA LEADERS, 24 November

I was back at Verity House in Edinburgh on the 24th November when COSLA Leaders met to discuss various subjects including the next stages of the Social Security Bill and operation of the new Social Security Agency; migration policy post Brexit and promotion of equality in Local Government. COSLA recognises the important role it has to play in promoting equality and diversity in local democracy and Leaders agreed to explore further options where this could be further developed.

Needless to say there was also discussion about the forthcoming Budget, details of which will be announced on 14 December. These are challenging times for all local authorities and in North Ayrshire we anticipate there will be a further funding shortfall over the next 3 years of approximately £70m.

That is why I was keen to ask the people of North Ayrshire to take part in the **online budget engagement** to see how any cuts would affect them and for them to have their say about what services they would like to protect. The results from this public engagement will help form our spending decisions with an ever decreasing budget while simultaneously trying to deliver the services our communities need and deserve.

JOINT YOUTH CABINET AT IRVINE ROYAL ACADEMY, 28 November

We held our latest Joint Youth Cabinet in Irvine Royal Academy on the 28th November. As always our young people excelled with the level of discussion and engagement. In particular I was delighted that the pupils challenged the answers they were given from the top table and helped initiate a debate back and forth. It is this sort of engagement with our young people which means that our Youth Services are 'sector leading'. I would like to pay a particular thanks to Irvine Royal Academy for hosting us and the Council's Modern Apprentices who do a fabulous job helping to organise these sessions.

MEETING WITH SCHOOL COUNSELLORS, 29 November

On being appointed Leader of North Ayrshire Council, it was my intention from the outset to visit some of the teams and staff that work in our sectors and different communities, to appreciate the vast array of work that the Council is involved in. I was fortunate to meet with some of our newly appointed school counsellors on the 29th November and have a chat with them to find out more about the invaluable work they are doing in our schools to help support our young people.

Sometimes, problems can seem insurmountable to the best of us and therefore it was reassuring to know that young people in our schools now have professional help to turn to when they need someone to listen to them and/or provide advice. The team of Counsellors have already shown that their work is making a difference to the lives of many of our pupils in North Ayrshire. Thank you.

COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP, 30 November

The Community Planning Partnership Board met in Ayrshire College on the 30th November. The agenda included a presentation from Community Justice Ayrshire, Ayrshire College on their Strategic Plan and on North Ayrshire's Local Housing Strategy. North Ayrshire Council officers also gave updates on Welfare Reform and Participatory Budgeting. The Board agreed that partners should follow the Council's lead and work to secure Carer Positive Employer status.

YEAR OF YOUNG PEOPLE LAUNCH, 8 December

On the 8th December I was proud to take part in the launch of North Ayrshire's "Year of Young People" (YOYP) in Cunninghame House. The aim of the YOYP is to celebrate the achievements and work of our young people and to showcase the valuable contribution that they make to their communities.

The year will also provide new opportunities for young people to influence decision making on the issues that affect their lives and matter most to them. I have no doubt that with the wealth of talented young people throughout North Ayrshire, 2018 promises to be an exciting one, a year where they can positively influence other young people and inspire other generations for many years to come.

ECONOMIC, DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION BOARD, 8 December

On the 8th December the Economic Development and Regeneration Board met and heard updates on regional partnership collaboration and its industrial strategy. There was also an update on progress of the Ayrshire Growth Deal. While I am hugely disappointed to see that the AGD was not specifically mentioned in the Chancellor's recent budget, I remain in hope this will be given the funding and support that the whole of Ayrshire needs and rightly deserves.

FINAL COMMENTS

As 2017 draws to an end, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff in NAC who work so tirelessly throughout the year to provide high quality public services to the people of North Ayrshire. I look forward to working with you all again in 2018.

I would like to wish you and your loved ones a very Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Cullinane'.

Councillor Joe Cullinane
Leader North Ayrshire Council