

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **COUNCIL MEETING - 23 JUNE 2011**

#### **SIX MONTHLY UPDATE ON CABINET ACTIVITIES**

##### **Report by Leader of the Council**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

**1.1** As my fourth year as Council Leader ends, I am pleased to present my latest six monthly report to Council. It has been another extremely busy time for Cabinet and this report outlines some key issues and achievements considered during this period.

**1.2** Cabinet has, once again, dealt with a broad range of initiatives and programmes which will have a lasting and positive impact on our communities with the objective of achieving our three strategic priorities of:-

- Regenerating our Town Centres;
- Improving educational attainment; and
- Building new Council housing.

## **2. STRATEGIC PLANNING, MANAGEMENT AND RESOURCES AND EQUALITIES**

### **2.1 Revenue Budget 2011/12**

**2.1.1** In February of this year the Cabinet presented to Council this Administration's budget for 2011/12. Again, we were able to deliver a freeze in the Council Tax whilst also continuing to meet the key principles of our budget strategy.

**2.1.2** The background for the budget setting process was again dominated by the difficult economic climate across the public sector. We achieved the required savings target of £8.263m and, by listening and responding to our communities and employees through our most extensive ever consultation and engagement process, we adjusted the proposed savings package to address many of the important matters that were raised with us.

**2.1.3** In addition to the adjustments to the savings package, we also invested an additional £1m in road repairs, asked officers to bring forward proposals for a new model for our early years services and established a Business Enterprise Fund that will be challenged and supported by some of the most successful business leaders in Scotland to help prepare our young people for the world beyond school.

## **2.2 Race Equality Scheme Progress Report**

**2.2.1** The Council has always sought to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination and harassment and promote good relations amongst communities in East Ayrshire. Some of the work carried out recently by the Council includes:-

- Our Equality Week - with over 30 events between 7 and 11 March 2011 designed to raise awareness and encourage participation from Council employees, partners and citizens in the promotion of equality and diversity throughout East Ayrshire.
- International Women's Day - the Asian Women's Group with support from the Council organised an event to mark International Women's Day which was held at the North West Area Centre, Kilmarnock.
- Annual Show Racism Roadshow - in partnership with Show Racism the Red Card and Kilmarnock Football Club an annual event was held to promote anti-racist education to all Primary 7 aged pupils, and
- Promotion of translation and interpretation services covering different languages, consisting of a combination of telephone translation, face to face translation and interpretation.

## **2.3 Relocation of Flowerbank Nursery and Provision of New Adult Day Service Facilities in Kilmarnock Town Centre**

**2.3.1** In January, Cabinet considered the outcomes of the detailed option appraisal on the proposed configuration for both a replacement Flowerbank Nursery and Family Centre and a new Adult Day Service facility on the sites of the Woodstock Special School and the Woodstock Centre. This was followed in May 2011 when Cabinet approved the statutory public consultation process on the future of educational and care provision for the current site of Flowerbank Nursery and Family Centre. The outcomes of the statutory consultation will be presented back to a future meeting of Cabinet.

## **2.4 Grant Funding to External Bodies**

**2.4.1** Cabinet has once again shown its support to external organisations that deliver a range of sports, leisure and cultural activities throughout East Ayrshire.

**2.4.2** The groups that have received grant funding in the last six months are:-

- The Galleon Centre;
- Visions Leisure Trust;
- Dunlop Community Hall;
- Dunlop Park;
- Mauchline Holy Fair;
- Cumnock Highland Games; and
- Darvel Music Festival

**2.4.3** In total, Cabinet approved payments of £401,473 to these groups and, through the budget process, we were able to deliver reductions in the proposed cuts to the funding for these organisations recognising the valued contribution that they make to the Improving Health and Wellbeing, Promoting Lifelong Learning and Delivering Community Regeneration Action Plans.

## **2.5 Developer Contributions Fund**

**2.5.1** The Developer Contributions Fund continues to work well with cross-party working to determine applications which are less than £15,000.

**2.5.2** Applications of over £15,000 are submitted to Cabinet for consideration, with applications having been approved for £18,900 for floodlighting and replacement fencing at Kilmarnock Tennis Club and £25,100 for the refurbishment of the changing area at Townholm Bowling Club.

**2.5.3** Some of the groups who have received funding below £15,000 are:-

- Dunlop and Lugton Park Association - £10,000;
- Galston Youth Forum - £2,931.50;
- Waterside Community Association - £2,500;
- North West Amateur Boxing Club - £13,151;
- Irvine Valley Regeneration Partnership - £10,000;
- Cluarankwai Judo Club - £7,000; and
- Hurlford Badminton Coaching Club - £900.

## **2.6 General Services Capital Investment Programme 2011/12-2018/19**

**2.6.1** On 1 June 2011, Cabinet received a report on progress made with regard to the 10 Year Capital Investment Programme 2009/10-2018/19 and agreed amendments to the programme.

**2.6.2** This 10 Year Capital Programme was designed around the key objectives of the approved Capital Investment Strategy to provide a framework for capital investment aligned to the Council's Asset Management aspirations which are designed to support specific priorities of the Council which make a positive contribution towards the Community Plan and service delivery objectives.

**2.6.3** Some of these projects are detailed below:-

- Schools

All key milestones in relation to the major schools projects indicated to members as part of the re-planning and resourcing exercise undertaken during 2010 have been achieved; work is underway on site at Willowbank School, Gargieston Primary School and Darvel Primary School extension. Projects at Sorn Primary School, New Cumnock Primary School and Littlemill Primary School will begin over the next few months.

- Muirkirk IFE Wing

An opportunity has been identified to refurbish and enhance the Muirkirk IFE Wing in consultation with the Community Association with one option being to create an Area Centre incorporating a new library and local office.

It is also proposed to move the Nursery Class in Muirkirk from the existing separate building to the Primary School.

- Floodlit Synthetic Grass Sports Pitches

Building on the success of the new Leisure Centres at Grange Academy and St Joseph's Academy it is proposed to create new Leisure Centres at Auchinleck Academy and Loudoun Academy, to expand the Leisure Centre provision at Doon Academy and to add a new floodlit synthetic grass pitch at Bellfield Park.

- Public Art

It is proposed to commission a new work within Dean Castle Country Park as a memorial for International Workers Memorial Day and to ensure that the contribution to medicine of Sir Alexander Fleming is commemorated in Darvel by commissioning of a piece for Hastings Square.

- New Cumnock

It is proposed to relocate the existing Local Office into available space within the New Cumnock Community Centre including minor upgrading works to the Community Centre.

**2.6.4** The 10 Year Capital Investment Programme is a key element in ensuring the Council delivers on its Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement which reflects local needs, circumstances and priorities. The acceleration of projects is designed to help the local economy and approximately 4,000 trades persons will be on our sites in this financial year.

## **2.7 Review of Health and Safety**

**2.7.1** Health and Safety remains high on the Council's Agenda with the final report, and recommendations, of the review of the Council's health and safety arrangements being reported to Cabinet on 11 April 2011. The report also outlined the steps which have been taken to address the matters identified in that report.

**2.7.2** The report concluded that East Ayrshire Council has made significant progress since the original 2009 review and stated that many of the issues highlighted in the original report have been addressed and that the Health and Safety Improvement Plan was also completed at the time of the follow-up review.

**2.7.3** It is accepted that some areas require on-going review but the report stated that the drive and focus of the Health and Safety Section and Senior Management to continue to improve health and safety within East Ayrshire Council is apparent.

**2.7.4** A summary of the findings are detailed below:-

- Health and Safety Training for Staff - the report noted that considerable work had been undertaken by the Council in order to achieve compliance within this area and it is recommended that ongoing monitoring of safety training for staff should continue;
- Incident Reporting - the original report found that a systematic failure for incidents and near misses to be fully pursued with appropriate and adequate remedial actions taken. The follow-up report noted that improvements had been made to incident investigation and action procedures;
- Working at Height - the report recommended that random inspections continue and that the communications campaign developed be rolled out as soon as possible;
- Occupational Stress - stress is one of the main reasons for absence within the Council and a recent analysis showed that although fewer people are absent due to work related stress, when they are absent it tends to be for a longer period. The Council are currently pursuing a sensible and reasonably practical approach to dealing with occupational stress management and it is recommended that this good practice continues;
- Organisational Recommendations - the report recommended that a three year Road map be developed for improving health and safety within the Council, detailing the direction the health and safety culture of the Council should be taking.

**2.7.5** Addressing the issues identified by the report will allow the Council to continue to meet its statutory obligations to provide a safe and healthy working environment for its employees.

**2.7.6** Cabinet also receives, on a quarterly basis, health and safety performance reports which report on accidents and incidents, investigations, events, assessments and reviews, health issues as well as training and reports on Departmental Health and Safety Action Plans.

**2.7.7** The Departmental Action Plans seek to build on current activity and demonstrate compliance with the statutory duties placed upon the Council. The requirements of the Policy for Health, Safety and Welfare at Work will be supported by the regular review of management information, the identification of appropriate training and the provision of a work environment that is safe and without significant risk.

### **3. DEVELOPING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

#### **3.1 Local Community Planning Forums**

**3.1.1** The Local Community Planning Forums met jointly in February of this year and received a presentation on feedback on the four-yearly review of the Community Plan and also had the opportunity to discuss a review of the Local Community Planning Forums.

**3.1.2** In addition to the submissions made at the Joint Community Planning Forum, Forum Members were further invited to seek their respective organisations' views to support the review process.

**3.1.3** Officers are now considering the submission and will present options for discussion and comment at a further Joint Local Community Planning Forum. As ever I look forward to hearing the outcome of these discussions and to the further strengthening of our engagement activity with our communities.

#### **3.2 Equalities Forum**

**3.2.1** The Equalities Forum held on 3 February discussed and debated (i) the Common Allocation Policy, which was a priority for 2009/10; and (ii) Health and Care in the community in East Ayrshire which was a priority for 2010/11.

**3.2.2** The next meeting of the Forum was held on 9 June 2011 and discussed Promoting Citizenship. The Forum also set its priorities for 2011/12, including Health in the Community and Community Education equality integration work.

#### **3.3 Children and Young People's Forum**

**3.3.1** The Children and Young People's Forum met on 2 February and discussed bullying, territorialism and gang culture.

**3.3.2** They met again on 18 March to review their activities and again I look forward to future Forum meetings which always generate good debate and discussion with the young people.

### **4. PROMOTING LIFELONG LEARNING**

**4.1** There are a number of exciting projects happening within our schools at this time which Cabinet have been kept up-to-date with.

**4.2** As previously advised, work is underway at Willowbank School, Gargieston Primary and Darvel Primary School extension. Projects at Sorn Primary School, New Cumnock Primary School and Littlemill Primary School will begin over the next few months. The investment involved in these projects is over £37m.

**4.3** This Administration is committed to improving the facilities in which teachers and pupils work and learn. These projects will continue to ensure that we meet the needs of the curriculum and adapt to accommodate the flexibility which is required across our schools estate. Our long term vision is to constantly improve the service offered to children and young people and these projects go a long way towards that.

#### **4.4 Curriculum for Excellence Development Plan**

**4.4.1** Cabinet on 20 April 2011 approved the implementation of a Development Plan for Curriculum for Excellence for 2011/15.

**4.4.2** Curriculum for Excellence focuses classroom practice upon the child based on four “capacities” which provide opportunities for children and young people to develop as: successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

**4.4.3** The Development Plan provides guidance for taking forward the Curriculum for Excellence in East Ayrshire over the next four years and sets out a shared vision for the way forward and clarifies the roles and responsibilities at all levels of those involved in implementation.

**4.4.4** Parents/carers will be involved in the development of the Curriculum for Excellence Programme and it is anticipated that it will be a standard item on the Agenda of each Parent Council and that parents/carers are consulted during formalisation of the individual Development Plan in each educational establishment.

#### **4.5 The East Ayrshire More Choices More Chances (MC:MC) Strategy**

**4.5.1** In April 2011, Cabinet received an update on the outcomes of the MC:MC Strategy for 2011-2013.

**4.5.2** The report noted that the percentage of school leavers entering positive destinations in East Ayrshire was 88.4% which is above the national average of 85.7% and is an improvement of 3.7% from 2009.

**4.5.3** The Community Planning Partnership, using MC:MC funding, has helped East Ayrshire outperform our five comparator Authorities and this is notable given the challenging levels of unemployment in East Ayrshire.

### **5. DELIVERING COMMUNITY REGENERATION**

#### **5.1 Knockroon Design Code**

**5.1.1** As Members will be aware, work has started on the Knockroon site, which I am sure everyone will agree, is one of the most exciting developments East Ayrshire Council has had the privilege to be part of.

- 5.1.2** The development is part of our overall strategy for the economic regeneration of the area through sustainable growth and the attraction of new residents, employment and visitors area will raise the profile of East Ayrshire as a whole and also provide the foundation for more opportunities and prosperity.
- 5.1.3** The Knockroon Design Code was approved by Cabinet on 15 December 2010 and will ensure that the vision of a high quality design for the site will be carried through from the first phase of the development to the last.
- 5.1.4** I was delighted that HRH The Prince of Wales was able to visit the site on 31 May 2011 and I very much look forward to seeing this development progress.

## **5.2 Kickstart Council House Building Bid Submission**

- 5.2.1** At its meeting on 1 June 2011, Cabinet agreed the submission of a fourth phase bid for funding to the Scottish Government and CoSLA to assist in the provision of new Council housing across East Ayrshire.
- 5.2.2** This bid builds on the success of the previous three phases. Phase 1 works were completed on 30 November 2010, over two months ahead of the programme and all 10 houses have been allocated and are occupied in accordance with the Letting Plan.
- 5.2.3** Phase 2 commenced on 10 January 2011 at Creelshaugh Road, on 21 February 2011 at Newlands Drive and on 14 March 2011 at Lammermuir Road. The contractor is making good progress with works on each of the sites and anticipates completing the first project at Creelshaugh Road ahead of schedule.
- 5.2.4** The 30 additional new affordable houses have been identified specifically to meet the needs of an identified growing older population and will therefore be allocated to older/ambulant disabled people.
- 5.2.5** Phase 3 will see a further 10 houses commencing on site at Newlands Drive, Kilmarnock, and again the houses will be allocated to older/ambulant disabled people.
- 5.2.6** The provision of further new Council housing across East Ayrshire will continue to support the creation of sustainable communities by redressing stock lost in popular locations through the Right to Buy. It will also provide new, smaller sized houses suitable for older tenants in response to demographic trends, thereby allowing larger sized accommodation to be allocated to families wishing to remain within their local communities. In this way, Council led new housing development will contribute to alleviate pressure on affordable housing waiting lists whilst also promoting regeneration across East Ayrshire.

### **5.3 Taiglum Burn and Surrounding Areas Within Drongan**

**5.3.1** Improvement works will be carried out at the Taiglum Burn and surrounding areas and will include the clearing of the burn, construction of a burn side walkway, installation of a new fence alongside the burn and a commemorative plaque.

**5.3.2** The work will cost around £50,000 with £29,477 being funded from my Leader's Initiative budget.

### **5.4 Catrine Environmental Heritage Project - Community Right to Buy 14 Ballochmyle Street, Catrine**

**5.4.1** Cabinet recently awarded £165,599 to the Catrine Community Trust towards the purchase of the former St Joseph's Chapel and Priest's House at 14 Ballochmyle Street, Catrine.

**5.4.2** This is a very exciting project for the group as they plan to develop a Community Education and Visitor Interpretation Centre on the site.

**5.4.3** The sustainable regeneration of our town centres and villages is a key local outcome of the Delivering Community Regeneration Action Plan. This unique project incorporating heritage led regeneration and the use of renewable energy to provide an income to sustain the revenue implications of the Catrine Interpretation Visitor Education Centre will contribute to the sustainable regeneration of Catrine.

**5.4.4** The promotion and development of tourism is also a key local outcome under the Delivering Community Regeneration Action Plan. The Council, through the Four Towns Enquiry by Design process, has acknowledged the importance of the interconnectedness of the communities that straddle the A76 and the contribution that can be made through developments in Catrine, Dumfries House and Estate and Knockroon. Catrine is also a key location in relation to the River Ayr Way which has just been designated as one of Scotland's Great Trails - alongside the likes of the West Highland Way and the Great Glen Way, hopefully attracting more visitors to the area.

### **5.5 Condition of the Roads Network**

**5.5.1** Cabinet was advised on 9 March 2011 of a report "State of the Scottish Road Network" and considered the results for East Ayrshire which identified a cost of £52.24M to remove all the defects on East Ayrshire roads.

**5.5.2** Although it was recognised that it would not be cost effective to attempt to eliminate all defects and that there will always be a level of maintenance requiring attention, Cabinet was also aware of the pressures the Council was under to address the damage to the roads network resulting from the severe winter weather and agreed to approve investment of £1m from within the Roads and Transportation 10 Year Capital Investment Programme for this work.

**5.5.3** Cabinet recognised that a well maintained roads network would contribute to the aims of the Delivering Community Regeneration and Improving Community Safety Community Plan Themes by providing good access to our communities and the wider road network and which would help to reduce road accidents.

## **5.6 Decriminalised Parking - Enforcement In East Ayrshire**

**5.6.1** Parking Enforcement has an essential part to play in keeping our roads safe, ensuring that shoppers have access to short stay parking and that disabled drivers are able to access services as easily as possible.

**5.6.2** Currently our area traffic wardens are employed by Strathclyde Police and are responsible for on-street parking enforcement. The Police have indicated that from April 2012 the traffic warden service will no longer be provided to Local Authorities. Plans are now underway to introduce a scheme for Decriminalised Parking enforcement within East Ayrshire led by the Council.

**5.6.3** A very detailed study has been prepared regarding the feasibility of bringing Decriminalised Parking enforcement in-house. At the moment three traffic wardens enforce more than 57 kilometres of on-street waiting restrictions. By bringing this service under the control of the Council we will be able to focus our resources to areas most in need, for example at our schools, disabled parking bays and generally improve road safety.

**5.6.4** The Roads and Transportation Service will now prepare a detailed programme to introduce Decriminalised Parking enforcement locally by June 2012 and will continue to meet with neighbouring authorities regarding the possibility of working jointly on the project. The Council also has the support of SPT and they have provided funding for a comprehensive review of all existing Traffic Orders which will greatly assist the final implementation of this project.

## **5.7 Corporate Enforcement Unit**

**5.7.1** The Corporate Enforcement Unit continues to work well with a wide range of activities taking place in the first half of 2011 with major high profile environmental initiatives having been conducted in every settlement throughout East Ayrshire to detect and deter dog fouling, littering and illegal dumping. Regular inspections of workplaces and work vehicles were also carried out on a regular basis under the smoking legislation.

**5.7.2** Some recent activities carried out this year so far include:-

- Operation Aspen - a pro-active campaign to educate and prevent offences in relation to dumping tyres in East Ayrshire.
- Awareness campaigns - media and poster campaigns in respect of dog fouling.

- Zero Tolerance litter patrols.
- Bike patrols - to deter environmental crimes.

**5.7.3** A wide range of initiatives will continue to be kept under review and priorities within our communities will be targeted. I look forward to hearing how successful this year's campaign has been.

## **6. IMPROVING COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

### **6.1 East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee Annual Report and Business Plan**

**6.1.1** Cabinet was pleased to receive a positive update on the development of the East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee Annual Report and Business Plan.

**6.1.2** Key achievements included:-

- The development of a three year communications strategy which ensures that we are getting the right messages to the right people about keeping children safe;
- an online survey of Primary 5 pupils and 2nd Year pupils to gather views and arrangements to keep children safe;
- guidance for foster carers and staff in respect of internet safety; and
- strengthened governance arrangements, ensuring that the connections between strategic planning groups are strong and that there is a clear link between strategic planning and operational practice.

**6.1.3** There are two main areas for action in 2010/11 which are key management priorities and developments which support cultural change.

**6.1.4** This is a multi-agency Annual Report and Business Plan and I welcome the involvement of key partner agencies, all of whom contribute to the deliver of the East Ayrshire Community Plan.

### **6.2 Re-shaping Care for Older People**

**6.2.1** Cabinet has been kept up-to-date with regular reports on the Re-shaping Care for Older People Programme.

**6.2.2** The principle policy of the programme is to "optimise independence and wellbeing for older people at home or in a homely setting".

**6.2.3** Demographic change in East Ayrshire over the next 20 years will see an increase of 85% in people aged over 75. This population change will provide a real opportunity for older people to utilise their skills, knowledge and capacity to contribute to local communities.

**6.2.4** It is also anticipated that there will be resulting increases in resource demands and challenges for community social care and health services. In East Ayrshire, we have for a number of years recognised the challenges of such a change and have implemented a strategic direction to develop a health and social care infrastructure to support older people in our communities.

**6.2.5** Our partnership work already extends beyond the Community Health and Social Care Services and includes acute and primary health, housing, leisure and other vital stakeholders including family carers, independent, voluntary and community sectors.

**6.2.6** The Re-Shaping Care Programme is an integral part of the Health and Wellbeing Theme of the Community Plan and is a positive example of Community Planning Partners working together.

### **6.3 Social Work Stand-by Service**

**6.3.1** Cabinet on 23 March 2011 agreed to work with North Ayrshire Council and South Ayrshire Council to establish a local out-of-hours Social Work Service for Ayrshire and Arran.

**6.3.2** An Ayrshire-wide service in partnership with the NHS would have a number of advantages:-

- a combined contact centre for the citizens of Ayrshire;
- single point of contact for other emergency agencies;
- the possibility of better aligned responses between the Councils and NHS, for example, around homecare support for those at risk of emergency admission to hospital or care homes.

**6.3.3** The Council has a legislative duty for the delivery of effective Social Work Services which includes a response outwith office working hours. The proposals seek to enhance current arrangements for the delivery of services and improve continuity of Social Work Services to the most vulnerable people in our communities.

## **7. COMMUNITY SAFETY**

**7.1** Cabinet has considered and approved a number of important initiatives in the last 6 months that have all contributed towards the Improving Community Safety Community Planning theme.

**7.2** On road safety, some of the major initiatives that have been brought forward include:-

- the introduction of 20mph speed limit orders and speed tables in various locations;

- improvement projects for the A70 and A71 following a rural route improvement feasibility study; and
- agreement for a consultation exercise to take place within residential areas surrounding the Kilmarnock Town Centre for the introduction of the residents parking schemes.

**7.3** In terms of the re-design of our Community Safety Service, through the budget process, we were able to retain the post of Anti-social Behaviour Investigator which complements the commitment of Strathclyde Police to maintain the increase numbers of police officers within our communities.

#### **7.4 Consultation on the Future of Policing and Fire and Rescue Service in Scotland**

**7.4.1** Consultations were recently issued by the Scottish Government on the future of policing and the Fire and Rescue Service in Scotland.

**7.4.2.** In terms of the Police, the consultation focused on three options for the future structure of Police Services in Scotland, namely:-

- a single Scottish Police Force;
- a rationalised Regional Force model; and
- retention of the existing eight Forces with increased collaboration.

**7.4.3** Whilst a strong case has been made for the reform for Police Services, Cabinet agreed that a number of issues remain that require to be further considered and assessed before a final position can be taken on a preferred option relating to organisational structures, namely:-

- the protection of locality policing and frontline services;
- maintaining positive outcomes for local communities; and
- governance arrangements that protect local democratic accountability.

**7.4.4** In terms of the options for the future structure of Fire and Rescue Services the consultation focused on three options, namely:-

- a single Scottish service;
- a Regional structure; and
- retention of the existing eight services with increased collaboration.

**7.4.5** Again, whilst Cabinet accepted that a strong case has been made for the reform of the Fire and Rescue Service in Scotland, it agreed that a number of issues remain that require to be further considered and assessed before a final position can be taken on a preferred option relating to organisational structures, namely:-

- the efficiencies that change would deliver and the cost of structural reform;
- protection of the delivery of positive outcomes at a local level; and
- governance arrangements that protect local accountability.

## **8. CONCLUSIONS**

- 8.1** In conclusion I would like to thank all of our Council Officers for the range of work developed and presented to Cabinet over the last six months and as always to Elected Members of the Council for their continued positive participation in the decision-making process.

Councillor Douglas Reid  
**Leader of the Council**

CB/SC