

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING: 3 DECEMBER 2009

SIX-MONTHLY UPDATE ON CABINET ACTIVITIES

Report by the Leader of the Council

INTRODUCTION

1. As 2009 draws to a close, with another extremely busy six months for Council coming to an end, I am pleased to present my fifth six-monthly report to Council. This report, once again, outlines some of the achievements and issues considered by Cabinet.

DIAGEO

2. As colleagues will be aware, on 1 July 2009, Diageo announced its plans to close its Kilmarnock packaging plant and to sub-contract its Hurlford consolidation warehouse operations. From the moment Diageo made their announcement, communities throughout East Ayrshire united against the decision. The Council, politicians from across the political spectrum, local communities and local businesses joined together with Diageo employees to try and reverse the decision.
3. Following a summer of high profile campaigning activity, which included 20,000 people marching through the streets of Kilmarnock to show their anger and disappointment; and the development of an alternative sustainable business case, the closure proposal was confirmed in September. It will result in the loss of 700 jobs by the end of 2011. Recognising that this devastating closure has the potential to catapult the town to the top of the Scottish unemployment league, some positive steps were taken to mitigate the closure decision.
4. Determined to secure the best possible outcome for the town of Kilmarnock and the people who live there, East Ayrshire Council has established a Local Task Force to boost the town's economic recovery. Together with political leaders from the Council, Kilmarnock and Loudoun MP Des Browne and MSP Willie Coffey, make up the core team. This cross-party approach to this important issue has been welcomed.
5. The Task Force will be working to address the negative impact that the closure of the plant will have upon Kilmarnock, as the next generation comes forward looking for employment.

DEVELOPING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND THE DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE

Decision-Making Structure

6. In my previous update review to Council on 25 June 2009, plans to review the Council's decision making arrangements were set out. As Members will be aware, the review of the decision-making structures was considered by Council at its meeting in October 2009.
7. I am pleased that the existing decision-making structure will continue. I remain of the view that our existing arrangements provides, amongst other things, a transparent decision-making structure and accountable leadership, built on strong governance protocols and tested by clear cut scrutiny, challenge and performance reviews.
8. As a result of the review, and to further strengthen our existing arrangements, it was agreed to put in place added measures designed to further develop support to the decision-making structure. This includes increasing the frequency of Council meetings to every six weeks, thus providing a greater opportunity for debate, the provision for an additional Member from the Main Opposition Group to become a member of Cabinet (pending the outcome of the review of Cabinet portfolios) and the provision of substitute members for the Main Opposition Group.

Local Community Planning Forums

9. The Local Community Planning Forums are key to our arrangements for effective community engagement. A joint event was held with the Children and Young People's Forum in September of this year to discuss substance misuse issues, with a focus on alcohol, drugs and the work of East Ayrshire Licensing Forum.
10. The Joint Forum was attended by 113 people with an excellent mix of Elected Members, Community Planning Partners and young people.
11. The key issues raised at the Forum are being considered by a range of partners, including Christina Kinnear, Youth Commissioner for East Ayrshire and will inform the "National Youth Commission on Alcohol". Commissioners will look at the issues surrounding Scotland's relationship with alcohol, and will play a key role in shaping resolutions to the problem and presenting plans for future cultural change to the Minister for Public Health and Scottish Government. Colleagues can expect to hear more about this in due course.
12. The information from this Forum will also further inform the work being undertaken through the Community Planning Alcohol and Drugs Pledge.
13. The Forums met again in November and discussed Town/Village Regeneration in the Northern Area, Infrastructure to Support Tourism in the

Southern Area, Road Safety in Central South and Future Jobs/Employment in Central North.

14. This year's programme of Forum meetings will culminate in a joint event to be held next February to review and evaluate the work of the 2009/10 Forums and set the Agenda for 2010/11. As always, I look forward to participating in the Forums and I especially look forward to hearing the priorities identified for 2010/11.

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND THE SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

Community Planning

15. Cabinet once again received performance information that related to the six thematic Action Plans and the actions contained within the Community Planning Joint Officers Group Work Plan for 2008/09.
16. Across the six Action Plans there were 120 planned actions and 219 planned outputs. Of these outputs, 167 were fully achieved, 7 largely achieved and 34 partially achieved.
17. These actions are wholly linked to the priorities contained within the Community Plan and will be summarised in the Council's 2008/09 Annual Public Performance Report, currently being distributed to every household and business address in East Ayrshire.
18. Once again, excellent progress has been made across the Partnership against planned actions.
19. The 4 Thematic Action Plans that as set out in revised Community Plan were introduced with effect from 1 April 2009 and performance reports on these will feature in Cabinet business in the coming year.

Single Outcome Agreement

20. Cabinet also endorsed the first annual performance report in respect of the East Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership Single Outcome Agreement, which was submitted to the Scottish Government in September of this year.
21. This annual report is a factual statement covering progress against national and local outcomes and is produced each year using performance data from the previous financial year.
22. Given the extensive and broad ranging nature of the information contained in the annual performance report, the opportunity was taken to discuss this in some detail at a well received seminar for elected members held on 28 September 2009 at the Burns Monument Centre.

23. In the first year, performance is reported as follows:

- 62% - Improving Progress
- 6% - Maintaining Progress
- 22% - Improvement Required
- 10% - Data Unavailable (at present).

MANAGEMENT AND RESOURCES

Council-Wide Strategic Self Assessment of Performance Improvement Action Plan

24. As Members will recall from my previous update report I mentioned that the Council was planning to undertake its second Council-wide Strategic Self Assessment of Performance. The outcomes from the exercise were considered by Cabinet in May 2009. The process provided the opportunity to undertake a current comprehensive Council-wide health check of progress made against the ten Best Value criteria.
25. Cabinet asked that the Chief Executive should return to Committee with a high level improvement action plan to address the areas for improvement identified within the Improvement Agenda.
26. Areas for action/improvement were identified as being:-
- Performance management – to continue progressing the new I.T. based system
 - Responsiveness – to measure performance against customer first service standards
 - Sustainability – to develop an “all Ayrshire” waste management objective
 - Effective use of resources – to update Council’s medium term financial strategy
 - Partnership working – to further align Partner’s budgets and information sharing arrangements.
27. These actions have been developed by the Corporate Management Team into a high level improvement action plan, which was approved by Cabinet in June 2009.
28. The process supports the Council in demonstrating its continuous improvement in service delivery across our communities and facilitates the achievement of the Council’s three key strategic objectives of improving educational attainment, town centre regeneration and the provision of new Council housing.
29. The strategic self-assessment was a key component of the Council’s preparations for the Best Value 2 Audit, carried out by Audit Scotland during September 2009. The results of the Best Value Audit will be reported by the

Accounts Commission early in 2010, and the outcome considered at a future Cabinet meeting.

Corporate Health and Safety Action Plan 2009/2010

30. As Members would expect, health and safety issues are taken very seriously by this Council and earlier this year, Cabinet was updated on progress on the 2008/09 Action Plans. Good progress was made across a number of areas including inspections, training, briefings in relation to the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007, and the management of stress.
31. The Corporate Health and Safety Action Plan for 2009/10 identifies five objectives to be addressed over the coming year. These are:
- encouraging a positive culture involving all employees;
 - reducing incidents of ill health at work;
 - undertaking consistent and proportionate Health and Safety audits and inspections;
 - having well trained and competent employees; and
 - identifying key risk areas and appropriate actions.
32. These objectives aim to strengthen the developing positive safety culture of the organisation and to provide measurable targets and outcomes, building upon progress made in previous years.
33. In addition, as part of the commitment to continuous improvement, Cabinet agreed to engage a 'critical friend' to review the Council's current arrangements for Health and Safety management. This review has now been completed reported to Cabinet. An improvement plan has been approved following the recommendations made within the report.

Annual Report on Complaints and Comments 2008/09

34. Cabinet received a report in July of this year on complaints received and resolved by Council Services from 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009.
35. The number of complaints the Council receives continues to be low relative to the volume and complexity of the services delivered daily to the residents of East Ayrshire. The Council investigated 122 complaints during the year (a reduction of 16 from the previous year). Of the 122 complaints, 59 were considered to have been justified. Improvement measures and corrective action have been taken by Departments in response. Complainants who remained dissatisfied with the Council's administration of their complaint always have the opportunity to raise matters with the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman and it was pleasing to note that the Council, for the fourth year in a row, had no complaints upheld against it. In addition, 1,021 positive comments were received during this period.

36. Executive Directors will continue to review systems and procedures and seek to improve service delivery as a consequence of complaints and suggestions received from the public and other interested bodies.

Budget 2010/11 – 2012/13 Outline Strategy

37. Cabinet has agreed a strategy for the preparation of the Council's three year revenue budget for 2010/11 – 2012/13.
38. The significantly changed financial environment that we will face from 2010/11 means that a further refinement of the Council's budget planning process is required to reflect reduced overall resources and support the budget setting process. Consultation arrangements for the 2010/11 – 2012/13 budget have been designed to continue to ensure that in determining service level budgets, key service users, community representatives and Council employees have an opportunity to shape and understand their contribution over how the strategic vision and the strategies that contribute to its delivery can continue to be supported within the cash envelope available to the Council.
39. All three political parties have again been afforded the opportunity for the engagement of an appropriately qualified and experienced facilitator to support strategic direction discussions to ensure the widest possible understanding and discussion of how the financial resources available to the Council can best be deployed.

LIFELONG LEARNING

Educational Attainment

40. At the beginning of this year, Council agreed three priorities for 2009/10. One of these is to improve educational attainment to ensure that our young people are equipped with the right skills, the right knowledge and the right work ethic.
41. In October, Cabinet considered a progress report and agreed a range of measures designed to increase attainment across East Ayrshire education establishments. The report showed a range of measures that demonstrate continued improvement in attainment across our schools since 2005/06, including improvements in assessment and examination performance in 5 – 14 assessments and Scottish Qualification Awards.
42. The report also outlined the positive impact to date in improving educational attainment and achievement and set new targets designed to measure and report on overall performance.

School Estate

43. East Ayrshire Council has an established vision for its school estate that will ensure the delivery of a modern curriculum in school buildings that are

suitable for purpose and continued progress has been made with our work to improve our school estate.

44. The consultation on the proposal for the new build campus to house Patna Primary, nursery school and supported learning centre, as well as St Xavier's Primary on a site adjacent to the present Primary School was well received, with no objections to the concept of a new build.
45. It was clear from the comments that there is strong positive commitment from local people to be involved in the design process for the campus and reassurances have been given that this represented best practice by the Council based on the experience of recent major projects.
46. Consultation also took place on the proposal that Darvel Nursery School staff and children should relocate to the site of a newly extended refurbished Darvel Primary School.
47. The issues contained in the Consultation Document raised considerable interest amongst staff, parents and other interested parties, confirming the important place that schools have in the community and the real interest that parents and others have in the quality of education that their children receive.
48. These proposals now being taken forward within our Capital Programme, further fulfil the Council's vision, which states that we are committed to providing choice, maximising opportunity for all, developing the potential of individuals and meeting needs through inclusion.
49. Still under the improvement to our school estate, I was delighted to receive confirmation that the Council's bid under the Scottish Government's Schools Building Programme for a new build Gargieston Primary School and Nursery Class had been successful. This will see the Council receive an estimated £6m being 50% of full cost of the construction of the new school and nursery. Consequently, proposals will be brought forward with regards the impact on the overall Capital Investment Programme, taking into account the unsuccessful bid for the refurbishment and extension of Fenwick Primary School along with other projects. In the meantime, we very much look forward to delivering the new Gargieston Primary School and Nursery, which will complement and enhance the other investment that we are making in our school estate.

Early Education and Childcare Funding to Out of School Care Groups 2009/10

50. Cabinet recently approved £55,000 to support 10 out-of-school care providers across 16 locations in East Ayrshire. These groups provide a very important service to over 800 families.

Use of Additional Scottish Government Funding to Support the Curriculum for Excellence

51. The Council received £80,000 of funding from the Scottish Government to appoint an additional secondary Principal Teacher to support the existing Curriculum for Excellence Co-ordinator, with the balance of funding to be used to maintain the present co-ordinator in post until June 2010 and to support the next stage of development of the Curriculum for Excellence across Scottish Schools.
52. Significant steps have been made in East Ayrshire towards the implementation of a Curriculum for Excellence during Session 2008/09. Schools have been involved in a wide variety of in-service and training programmes and this additional money will allow the service to ensure that two experienced professionals are co-ordinating the programme, giving added status and value and demonstrating to parents and carers, the Scottish Government and schools that the Council is delivering the Curriculum for Excellence. The additional resource that this brings will ensure the delivery of the new examination structure to begin in session 2013. It will better enable secondary schools to meet this challenge and to have in place a robust S1-S3 curriculum, which includes inter-disciplinary courses and programmes, all with a view to supporting students in the transition.

Youth Music Initiative and Instrumental Music Service

53. The Youth Music Initiative has been operating in East Ayrshire for six years and is varied in terms of focus and delivery. In session 2008/09, over 6,500 pupils participated in Youth Music Initiative Programmes and activities such as Sounds of Singing, ABC Creative Music, ABC Global Citizenship Through Music, Enhanced Instrumental Staffing, Primary Choral Development and Saturday Morning Scottish Traditional Music Centre in partnership with the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama.
54. Two of these programmes - Sounds of Singing and ABC Creative Music contribute significantly to the Council meeting the Scottish Government's Youth Music Primary 6 target, which is that all school children should have had access to one year's free music experience by the time they reach Primary 6.
55. I am pleased to advise that following a successful application to the Scottish Arts Council, £190,000 has been awarded to support a range of innovative and creative music experiences for Year 7 of the initiative.

COMMUNITY WELLBEING

Community Health Improvement Partnership - Progress Report

56. Cabinet received a positive progress report from the Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP), which was established in 2001 to directly

address health inequalities within our most deprived communities with a particular emphasis upon coronary heart disease.

57. The project has developed considerably in line with local and national priorities. The focus of the service as a whole expanded to address the wider 'Reducing Health Inequalities' agenda.
58. The service now incorporates a Lifestyle Referral Scheme, which includes an extensive programme of community based classes and services, a men's health and equalities programme including homeless people and the prison population, the Healthworks Workforce Initiative, older people's community and home based lifestyle programmes, Cookwell healthy eating programme and a range of community based health events and initiatives.
59. The CHIP initiative has now been secured in the long term, with the project mainstreamed by the Council in partnership with NHS Ayrshire and Arran.

East Ayrshire Athletics Facility Progress

60. We are now moving forward with our ambitious plans for a new state of the art athletics facility in Kilmarnock. This will attract athletes from all over Scotland to the town as well as developing local sporting talent.
61. The new international quality athletics track and associated buildings at Queens Drive, with a footbridge to be constructed over the river, will create an innovative Kilmarnock Sports Park providing for several major sports on one site.
62. The new facility will include a 400 metre outdoor oval athletics track, an indoor training space, a strength and conditioning room, a classroom and a spectator stand for 120.
63. The Council regards the athletics track and associated facilities as key components of the regeneration of Kilmarnock and East Ayrshire. It will place the Council at the forefront of sports facility provision in Scotland and will provide a dedicated training location for many of our talented athletes as they prepare for the 2014 Commonwealth Games. In addition, the facility will provide a venue for hosting major competitions and, as such, bring tourism and income to the local economy.
64. The investment of £5.7 million, which has been made available through accelerating the Capital Programme, will undoubtedly assist the construction industry in these challenging times and provide a number of good jobs for local residents. All in all, this promises to be a development that will leave a legacy for future generations.

New Sporting Futures - 2014: Charter for Sport

65. The 2014 Commonwealth Games being hosted in Glasgow brings a real and tangible opportunity to inspire our community on a number of levels including

local athlete participation and performance, opportunities for sports volunteers, coaches and officials and the potential hosting of training camps within East Ayrshire as a result of the planned state of the art athletics facility at Queens Drive, Kilmarnock.

66. In times of economic uncertainty, it is important that there are positive, high profile developments and events that contribute to the 'feel good factor'. The introduction of a 2014: Charter for Sport, whilst supporting our most talented local sports people to achieve their full potential, will also ensure that the wider population of East Ayrshire are infused and encouraged to participate in sport and physical activity.
67. A range of funding has been secured in order to implement the various elements of the Talented Athlete Support Fund. This will be available until 31 March 2014 and amounts to £35,000 per annum.

Stewarton Sports Facilities

68. Cabinet has agreed that a new state of the art sports facility will be built at Strandhead Park, Stewarton. The facility will comprise a sports hall and other indoor facilities, co-located with a floodlit synthetic grass pitch.
69. Strandhead Park was identified as the preferred location due to its ease of access and central location and the opportunity to utilise the disused red blaise pitch and upgrade changing facilities without significant loss of amenity for the community.
70. Officers from the Department of Neighbourhood Services have been in touch with every sports club in Stewarton and overwhelming support has been received for the new facilities, particularly from both the Community Council and Stewarton Annick Football Club.
71. The development of this new facility will support the delivery of key targets and actions within the Improving Health and Wellbeing and Delivering Community Regeneration themes of the Community Plan.

Inspections

72. The last six months has been a busy period for inspection activity under the Community Wellbeing portfolio. The most recent inspection related to the Joint Inspection of Services to Protect Children and Young People (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education) which commenced on 26 October 2009. This inspection is part of the new HMIE 3 year inspection cycle for joint inspections and follows on from the last joint inspection that took place in 2007.
73. Cabinet also received information on the outcomes from the Ayrshire Criminal Justice Performance Inspection carried out by the Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) which noted that good progress had been made on all

aspects of the action plan that had been developed following the initial inspection in December 2006/January 2007.

74. Lastly, Cabinet has also approved an Action Plan prepared in response to the Social Work Inspection Agency Performance Inspection of Social Work Services which was published in June 2009 and contained 15 recommendations for improvement.
75. Social Work plays a significant role in the delivery of Community Planning objectives. The actions detailed in the Action Plan will further strengthen Social Work's contribution in particular to the Improving Health and Wellbeing and Promoting Community Safety themes.

ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION

Delivering Community Regeneration

76. Delivering community regeneration remains one of our top priorities and much has been achieved within the last six months.
77. Following Diageo's regrettable decision to close down Johnnie Walker plant in Kilmarnock, with the loss of 700 jobs, the Council is moving forward with ambitious plans for a £21 million cash injection into Kilmarnock Town Centre.
78. The Scottish Government announced earlier this month that Kilmarnock will receive £1.16 million from the Scottish Government's Town Centre Regeneration Fund. The total level of partnership funding now committed to the regeneration project is over £1.7 million. This is in addition to the £17 million pounds secured through the Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme and the Heritage Lottery Fund as well as the Council's own £21 million capital investment. Total committed regeneration funding for the Kilmarnock area, stands at £39.7m
79. Cabinet approved investment plans for the regeneration of the Town Centre and the Council has ambitious plans designed to get hundreds more people working and shopping in the town centre on a daily basis.
80. As part of these proposals, the Council will create new office accommodation and refurbish existing Council owned properties. This will include the creation of a Town Centre Office Campus for 800 existing employees, involving the refurbishment of a number of significant Town Centre buildings, including the former Johnnie Walker whisky bond in the Strand which is scheduled for completion by summer 2010.
81. The presence of these 800 office workers in the Town Centre will have a direct effect on the retail trade in the Town Centre and an increase in spending the 'lunchtime pound', all helping to sustain many local retail businesses. Making Kilmarnock more attractive will bring in extra shoppers and create a vibrant Town Centre we all want to live in, work in and enjoy.

- 82.** In addition, we have secured an additional £4.5 million grant funding from the Kilmarnock Townscape Heritage Initiative and from Historic Scotland's Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme, again this will go a long way to restoring some of our town's historic architecture to its former glory.
- 83.** This is good news for Kilmarnock, particularly in the wake of Diageo's recent announcement to close its Hill Street Plant. The regeneration of our Town Centres remains high on our agenda of priorities and there are strong foundations already in place.
- 84.** In addition, funding was received through the Town Centre Regeneration Fund for both Cumnock and Galston Town Centres. The Council was successful in securing almost £1m from a pot of £40m, competing with another 131 applicants for the first round of funding.
- 85.** I am absolutely delighted that the Council has secured substantial funding from the Scottish Government's Town Centre Regeneration Fund. The implementation of the projects in Cumnock and Galston will create improved town centres of which residents, businesses and visitors can be proud.
- 86.** The Cumnock Creating Civic Space Project received a total of £749,000, bringing total funding for the Project to £1.1 million. The Project will create a high quality public space to enhance the Town Hall, an important civic and community building and will improve access to the Town Centre. The demolition of the vacant and derelict former Bingo Hall in Glaisnock Street is an essential part of the project. Seating areas will be created in an attractive landscaped area, lit up at night by a flood lighting scheme that will emphasise the key features of the site whilst increasing community safety. Both the new civic space and the car park to the rear will incorporate the installation of CCTV coverage. The new civic space will link directly to the new car park to the rear of the Town Hall and the site of the former Burgh Yard; all in all, providing significant improvement for our public realm buildings and open spaces.
- 87.** Galston was awarded £250,000 from the Town Centre Regeneration Fund for the "Galston: Achieving Sustainable Regeneration" Project. This money is for the acquisition and provision of a new car park plus the acquisition and preparation of the site at the corner of Cross Street/Bridge Street for redevelopment, at a total cost of £535,000. In addition, a Council capital investment of £3.8 million has been approved by Cabinet for the provision of a new local office and refurbishment of community facilities and social work team accommodation, in the town centre.
- 88.** All of these worthwhile projects will contribute greatly to the Council's priority of regeneration in our town centres. The competition for funding was extremely fierce, however, yet again, East Ayrshire has been successful and I look forward to seeing the projects develop over the coming months.

Kick Start Council House Building Bid Submission

89. Building new local authority housing was identified as a key priority for 2009/10. Although an initial bid to the Scottish Government was unsuccessful, on 26 June 2009, the Council received confirmation that following reconsideration of the first phase submission, an award of £0.25 million had been secured. The development of part of the site of the former St Matthew's School at Macdonald Drive will provide ten new council houses for older/disabled people.
90. A second stage bid was submitted for the provision of a further forty houses across East Ayrshire, and I look forward to a decision being announced later this month.
91. In addition, the Council's Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP), which was considered at the meeting of Cabinet on 18 November 2009, set out the anticipated overall investment programme for the Council area based on an Affordable Housing Investment Programme Allocation of £50.741M. This will deliver 780 houses during the 2009/10 to 2013/14 period with a total programme spend of £91.651M.

CONCLUSIONS

92. Over the last six months, I believe that the Cabinet has considered and agreed a range of programmes and public realm projects which will have a lasting impact on our local communities and, in particular, will assist Council deliver on its three strategic priorities of:
 - Regenerating our Town Centres;
 - Improving Educational Attainment; and
 - Building new Council Housing.
93. With the confirmation of the closure of Diageo, we need to continue to work on a cross party basis, to ensure that every effort is made to mitigate the impact of the closure. I believe that the Task Force set up to do this will provide a solid foundation for developing an action plan to grow jobs, support business and bring new investment to the area.
94. In conclusion, once again I would like to take the opportunity to thank all of our Council officers for the exciting range of work developed and presented to Cabinet over the last six months and to all elected members of the Council for their continued and positive participation in all elements of the decision making process.

Douglas Reid
Leader of the Council

27 November 2009