

It has been a very busy few months for me since my last update.

I Finished off my update September with The September Sleepout on the 28<sup>th</sup>, which meant a night on the ground in a sleeping bag to highlight the issue of homelessness and addiction. This was a great event and we were lucky enough to have a mild, dry night where the temperature only dropped to 5 degrees Over £5000 was raised and this will go to help the Riverside Community Trust continue the good work they do.

Earlier that day I attended the new Queen Margaret Academy Topping Off Ceremony, it was the ceremonial closing over of the roof and celebration of that stage completion. It is on schedule for its opening in October this year.

Saturday the 29<sup>th</sup> was the SNP Day of Action and I was out on both the High Street Stall and a small number of us canvassing the ward.

September also seen additional funding awarded to Footways improvement – 450k was allocated to a works programme to improve pavements and paths across South Ayrshire after the harsh winter of last year.

The start of October was a pleasant surprise for me as I received notification that not only had I been nominated for an award, but I was shortlisted for the Environ Impact award at the inaugural LGiU Councillor Awards.(not bad for 16 months in office) I was 1 of 3 Councillors nominated in Ayrshire, none from East Ayrshire, 2 veteran Councillors from North and myself for South Ayrshire. I was nominated for my work with the Community Councils in the Burn Clean up and the Castlehill Paths Initiative.

One year on from our WASPI motion to council and pledging our support to the movement, I had the pleasure to once again sign the waspi pledge and reaffirm my support to the Ladies.

A motion was brought to council to create a Christmas light fund – 60k was set aside to allow communities to access funds to upgrade and improve Christmas lighting.

I also attended a few of the Council's Recycling roadshows to promote and highlight the new bins and service which is continuing to roll out across the Council area. As with all new schemes there will be some teething problems and these have proven to be minimal with the majority of people adapting to the scheme. If you have any issues with the bin system please do not hesitate to contact the Council or myself. Officers are happy to assess your situation and try to accommodate you as best they can.

In November I had the pleasure of attending the Wildwood Festival event held by the Belleisle Rangers, this was a major success and look forward to attending again this year.

I travelled to Edinburgh at the end of November to the CCLA LGiU Councillor awards, this event was held in Edinburgh City Chambers. This event gave me a chance to highlight what the SNP Group and Branches are doing in our areas to the rest of Scotland. In my category I was up against 5 long

serving established Councillors. I wasn't lucky enough to win on this occasion but I did manage to come second.

December seen a lot of activity in the Council, we had a public consultation on the Riverside block, progress was made on the train situation with Carriages finally moving south as the rail lines opening again, this happened with the completion of the stabilizing work to the exterior of the former station hotel. As well as allowing the trains to return to normal it also made the building safe enough for the structural surveyors to begin the safety report on the building.

Kincaidston Community Centre organised a secret santa for the community to provide those in need with a good Christmas dinner and the following festive days. The community was asked to nominate people and families to receive a food package. I went along on Christmas Eve to help pack and deliver these packages.

On Christmas morning I delivered 21 crates of food to the Riverside Community Trust , this allowed them to feed over 60 people over the festive season.

I also donated some food bags to the Red Cross.

The festive period also brought out a bout of bin burning in Kincaidston, at a Community Safety Partnership meeting I raised this issue with both the Police and the Fire Service and we are now working on a programme to take into the local schools and community to raise awareness of the dangers, legal implications and environmental impact on the local area.

To start off January I Had a meeting arranged with the Head of the ARA to address a list of issues I compiled over the Christmas break. Within days some of these issues were tackled and the rest are still in progress.

I attended Ayr Burns Club wreath laying service to Comemorate the 260<sup>th</sup> Birthday of The Famous Bard. I laid a tribute on behalf of the Council at Burns Statue.

I also attended the Burns weekend events in the high street where I got to parade down the High Street with Clanadonia.

British Tattoo Art Revealed – this event held by the council is running at Rozelle Galleries and is an exciting and interesting look into the history of tattoos and how they are incorporated into everyday life.

I started February by organising a mass clean up and litter pick in Kincaidston. It was a cold frosty morning but Myself, & Council operatives and volunteers from Kincaidston Community Council, the Scouts , Beavers and residents braved the elements an gathered over 38 bags of frozen litter, along with a few sofas, many cardboard boxes and other randomly dumped items.

Budget Consultations formed quite a lot of the month with us presenting our Budget options to the public to help us make informed decisions on what people consider priorities on where we spend and save money. This fully costed budget was presented to Full Council on the 28<sup>th</sup> with the Conservatives voting with the Administration to unanimously accept our proposals.

Clydesdale bank complete in 8 wks

Council rolls out SAFE LEAVE - We are delighted to be the first local authority in Europe to provide employees who are subjected to domestic abuse with up to 10 days paid 'Safe Leave'. Under our Special Leave Policy, the leave can be used to help to make appropriate arrangements such as to visit legal advisors or support agencies, attend medical appointments or legal proceedings, or to seek safe housing.

Domestic Abuse can be defined as: "Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional."

Under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill it is a criminal offence for a person to behave in a way which is abusive towards a partner or ex-partner. This includes psychological abuse such as coercive or controlling behaviour as well as violence.

In addition to the changes to our Special Leave Policy, guidance has been developed for managers in supporting employees subjected to domestic abuse, including signs to look out for and signposting to support agencies..

Until my next update.....

Chris Cullen SNP Councillor for Ward 4, Ayr East