



30th May 2024

Dear Councillor

I am writing on behalf of UNISON members in East Ayrshire Council. Councillors will shortly be asked to consider a proposal to transfer a whole host of council services to East Ayrshire Leisure Trust. The process has been badged a cross cutting service review; the name is apt as these proposals are driven by a cuts agenda.

UNISON has long argued the case that local government is not getting a fair deal and has worked with Cosla on many occasions to argue the point. We are therefore acutely aware of the financial pressures on the council. The response though should not be one of wholesale outsourcing of highly achieving services, putting them and their workers at risk whilst potentially destabilising a successful leisure trust.

Only last year the council rightly [celebrated](#) the achievements of Vibrant Communities. Vibrant Communities was an innovative response to the [Christie Commission](#) and earlier austerity measures and was focussed on early intervention and prevention. A withdrawal from the principles of the Christie Commission, a crisis response, is a major retrograde step from East Ayrshire Council.

There has been a failure to meaningfully consult with trade unions on these proposals. We only received a private and confidential paper on 28th May, so we can't share the detail of the proposals with our members.

What we do know from staff engagement sessions, which raised more questions than there were answers, is that the council will seek to cut the funding for Vibrant Community services by £1.5 million and overall a cut of £1.8 million is proposed.

It is ironic I write to you on the day the council was due to host a roundtable, now postponed due to the general election, to discuss how **£40 million is to be spent over the next 10 years in support of change, early intervention and prevention and other initiatives aimed at supporting communities. This is the very work of Vibrant Communities which is now being put at threat.**

We are supportive of the leisure trust establishing a trading arm and are keen to work with the trust to make this a success. There is though no guarantee that within a couple of years the trust will achieve turnover in this enterprise sufficient to generate in excess of

£1.8 million in **profit**; 'in excess' as there must be some net gain for the Trust for this to stack up.

If this highly ambitious profit margin is not achieved, then services will be cut and jobs will go and there is no avenue for redeployment of trust staff back to the council.

The Scottish Government and trade unions have established an agenda around [Fair Work](#), these proposal are out of sync with this agenda. References to the council becoming an enabling council is shorthand for one that cedes democratic control and sees its job to externalise and marketize services; we can see across social care in Scotland the bad outcomes this delivers for service users, workers and communities.

We therefor ask that the council to reject these proposals and instead ask officers to commence meaningful dialogue with trade unions on proposals that retain services in house and support the Leisure Trust to develop.

If you would like to discuss this further, please don't hesitate to get in touch. If you would like a UNISON speaker at your group meeting, please let me know.

Yours sincerely

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