

## South Ayrshire Council – 11 December 2025

### Formal Questions

<b>Received from:</b>	<b>Councillor Ian Cavana</b>
<b>Response to be provided by:</b>	<b>Chief HR Officer; and Director of Education</b>

	<i>Question</i>	<i>Response</i>
1.	<p>Last week a young lady from Ayr North, her name is Eilidh Mackay, stood up in front of the European Youth Parliament in Strasbourg and raised the issue for which I am now inspired to ask about.</p> <p>With a declining School roll, and ageing population within South Ayrshire, as per every report given to us from officers, I am looking to see what it is we are doing as a Council to promote and support new and young families across our organisation, with that in mind.</p>	
	<p>(a) What is the current agreement within council for both Maternity and Paternity support, for existing employees and for those entering into service?</p>	<p><b>South Ayrshire Council - Maternity/Adoption/Paternity Provision:</b></p> <p><b>Maternity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 52 weeks leave for all employees on maternity leave</li> <li>• <b>Maternity Pay</b> - 2 separate schemes for <b>Local Government</b> employees based on their length of service and earnings:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scheme 1 – Employee does not meet service and earnings criteria – maternity Allowance is paid by DWP.</li> <li>• Scheme 2 – Employee meets service and earnings criteria – 6 weeks at 90% of pay; 12 weeks at 50% of pay plus Statutory Maternity pay: 21 weeks at Statutory Maternity pay – <b>Total 39 weeks paid</b>. The remaining 13 weeks are unpaid.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<b>Question</b>	<b>Response</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Maternity Pay</b> – 2 separate schemes for <b>Teaching Staff</b> based on their length of service and earnings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scheme 1 – Employee does not meet service and earnings criteria – maternity Allowance is paid by DWP.</li> <li>• Scheme 2 – Employee meets service and earning criteria – full pay for 13 weeks; 26 weeks at Statutory Maternity pay – <b>Total 39 weeks paid</b>. The remaining 13 weeks are unpaid.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Adoption:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Adoption Leave and Pay</b> – 52 weeks of adoption leave for all employees. Adoption pay, mirrors the schemes described above in terms of length of service and earnings criteria.</li> </ul> <p><b>NeoNatal Care Leave and Pay:</b></p> <p>Day 1 right for parents whose babies require continuous neonatal care in the first 28 days following their birth. If both parents are Council employees, both will receive time off.</p> <p>Leave entitlement is a minimum of 1 week and a maximum of 12 weeks at full pay. There is the option for this to be extended by a further 4 weeks at full pay.</p> <p>The same arrangement will apply where there is an adoption or surrogacy arrangement.</p> <p><b>Time off for Antenatal Care and Pre - adoption meeting:</b></p> <p>Paid time off to attend appointments. Partners receive unpaid time off.</p> <p><b>Support Leave ( Maternity of Adoption):</b></p> <p>5 days full pay for nominated carers at around the time of birth or placement, to be taken during the period 1 week before and 3 weeks after the child’s birth or adoption placement. (Employees require 26 weeks continuous Local Authority service).</p>

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		<p><b><i>Paternity Leave (Maternity or Adoption):</i></b></p> <p>2 weeks paternity leave – 1 week and full pay and 1 week at Statutory Paternity Pay. (Employees require 26 weeks continuous South Ayrshire Council service).</p> <p><b><i>Shared Parental Leave:</i></b></p> <p>Instead of maternity/adoption leave being taken only by the mother, eligible employees (length of service and earnings related criteria apply) can choose to share 50 weeks of leave and 37 weeks of pay, where one of the partners returns to work and the other is on leave or both are on leave together. The time off allowed cannot exceed 52 weeks ( which would have been the original maternity leave period) Any Shared Parental Leave will be paid at Statutory pay rates (same rate as Maternity and Paternity pay).</p> <p><b><i>Contact Days during Maternity, Paternity and Shared Parental Leave:</i></b></p> <p>During Maternity Leave, and employee can return to work for 10 days and be paid in full normal salary, (this is normally utilised during the unpaid part of maternity leave).</p> <p>In addition, if an employee is utilising Shared Parental Leave, they can have an additional 20 contact days paid at full normal salary.</p> <p><b><i>Parental or Adoptive Leave:</i></b></p> <p>This is a period of unpaid time off work, employees have the right to take up to a maximum of 18 weeks unpaid time off between the child birth or adoption placement and their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday ( in effect a week for every year). A maximum of 4 weeks can be taken in any 1 year. (Employees require 1 years continuous Local Authority service)</p> <p><b><i>Other Current Provisions:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 days paid leave to deal with a family emergency to allow for alternative childcare arrangements to be put in place;</li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Max of 5 days paid leave if a child is hospitalised – additional time off is discretionary;</li> <li>• Paid time off to attend dentist and medical appointments with a child</li> <li>• Employee right to request flexible working from day 1 working for SAC</li> <li>• Employee with 2 years' service can apply for a Career Break</li> <li>• Special Redeployment Protection for employees who are pregnant or on maternity leave if they are affected by a department restructure.</li> </ul> <p><b>Future Provisions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Employment Rights Bill (ERB)</b>  <p>If approved, the ERB suggests in April 2026, there will be a day one right to paternity leave and unpaid parental leave, (rather than the current provision which requires a period of continuous Council Service).</p> <p>In 2027 , the ERB intends to strengthen protection against dismissal for pregnant employees and those returning form maternity leave.</p> </li> <li>• <b>SAC Policy - Future Development</b>  <p>Development of leave provision for Foster Care, Kinship Care (become a recognised Kinship Friendly Employer ) and benchmark Paternity Leave and Pay provision with other Local Authorities.</p> </li> </ul>
	(b) As above, with the addendum where it states “existing employees” to include, “teaching, administrative, janitorial and external (for example; Road crossing, specialised classes etc.), as well as any other that comes under the Education umbrella?	As above, the provisions outlined apply to education staff.

<b>Received from:</b>	<b>Councillor Craig Mackay</b>
<b>Response to be provided by:</b>	<b>Depute Chief Executive and Director of Housing, Operations and Development; Director of Communities and Transformation; and Chief Governance Officer</b>

	<b><i>Question</i></b>	<b><i>Response</i></b>
1.	<p><b>Vacant and derelict sites</b></p> <p>With regard to problems with vacant and derelict buildings which blight our town centres, not least the former Ayr Station Hotel site, to ask for a summary of discussions the council has had with the Scottish Government, or responses to government consultations, regarding Land Reform, Compulsory Purchase reforms, or other legal mechanisms which could help enable development of these problem sites and buildings to be progressed.</p>	<p>The Council has a range of mechanism available that can assist with enabling development of vacant and derelict land and buildings. This includes working with owners of vacant shops to encourage town centre living, promoting vacant and derelict buildings through the development planning system and intervening through arrangements such as compulsory purchase. There is a current consultation being undertaken by the Scottish Government on proposed amendments to compulsory purchase arrangements. The Planning Service is intending to respond to the consultation through delegated powers and will forward a copy of the response to all Elected Members. It should, however, be noted that amendments to these arrangements will not alter the requirement to demonstrate that intervention is acting in the public interest or the financial consequences from the Council arising from any acquisition and subsequent development.</p>
2.	<p><b>Caseload management</b></p> <p>Noting previous unsuccessful attempts over the last eight years at providing a functioning Caseload Management System for elected members; a briefing note from June 2025 stating that the absence of a system “presents a risk to Elected Members and the Service as a working Elected Members Caseload system is critical to their effective working”; and a more recent roadmap suggesting that councillor casework can be accommodated within a proposed new Customer Relationship Management System:</p>	
	<p>(a) Can assurance be provided that councillors will be adequately consulted on the</p>	<p>We will ensure that Councillors are fully engaged as we define the functional requirements of the proposed Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.</p>

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	<p>functionality requirements of the new system to meet their needs, in particular to handle the complexity of cases involving multiple constituents and council departments; to ensure the secure separation of confidential constituent details and notes from the enquiries being responded to by officers, and to resolve issues that the previously trialled system couldn't accommodate</p>	<p>Any consultation would address this need to manage complex cases that involve multiple constituents and interactions across different Council departments. We will uphold data protection standards, maintain confidentiality, and enable the CRM to deliver a comprehensive, compliant, and user-focused solution that meets both operational and governance expectations.</p> <p>With regards to design and in the context of technology projects we follow an “adopt, not adapt” principle, choosing to use the technology solution largely as delivered by the vendor, rather than customising or heavily modifying it to fit existing processes. This principle encourages process change over system change and we look to adapt our ways of working to the technology, rather than adapting the technology to our old ways of working. This means there may be process changes for all users of the system.</p> <p>We do this for a number of reasons including: cost control, customisation drives costs and standard solutions are easier (cheaper) to upgrade and maintain; best practice with vendors often designing systems based on industry best practices, which can improve efficiency; and risk reduction with less customisation means fewer integration issues and less technical debt.</p>
	<p>(b) Can a guarantee be given that the new system will be implemented, tested and fully functional at the very latest, in time for the new intake of councillors in May 2027?</p>	<p>While we would aim to have any new solution in place prior to this date we would not be able to guarantee this. We always plan and prepare to succeed and deliver on-time and on-budget but timeline slippages may and do occur in technology projects. Impacts can come from a range of factors including procurement constraints and timelines, security reviews and compliance, internal and external resource constraints, legal and vendor coordination issues.</p>
	<p>(c) With these basic tools been deemed “critical to effective working”, what provision is being made to fill the gap between now and the new system becoming available, and will data from the temporary system be fully transferred over as part of the transition?</p>	<p>Twelve specific points have been raised by the elected member with regards the existing technology solution and all bar 1 of the 12 issues raised – full integration with Outlook - can be resolved with an updated version available in mid-late January 2026. This would be made available to all Elected Members for them to use. Officers from the Councils Digital Services department are working with member services to implement the changes.</p>

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		<p>There is provision within the Council's ICT capital programme to fund the CRM system and a Business Case is being progressed. This will consider elected members as a key stakeholder group and is being progressed through the appropriate Council governance.</p> <p>The Council's Technology Roadmap and ICT Investment Strategy was updated in August 2025 to reflect the Councils commitment to transformation and changes actual and proposed to the Councils technology estate - to support current and future business requirements, as well as the requirement to consider increasing global cyber security issues. The ICT capital programme has reduced this year in response to critical organisational savings requirements. At the same time, a review is underway of the c.200 technology applications across the Council with a view to rationalisation and further reduction in costs.</p> <p>Where elected members are of the view to explore an alternative option, an architectural exemption* (also referred to as an architecture dispensation or waiver) can be granted for formal, temporary approval of a 3<sup>rd</sup> party line-of-business application. This exemption would be granted for the period of time up to the deployment of a functioning corporate solution when the temporary solution would be withdrawn and compliance with the Council's Strategy restored.</p> <p>Funding for this solution would be required from the sponsoring service due to savings being taken from both the ICT contracts budget and the ICT capital investment programme, as the latter is fully committed as per the 3-year Technology Roadmap.</p> <p>Implementation of this solution would require the development of a requirements specification followed by the appropriate procurement activities to remain compliant with the Council's Financial Scheme of Delegation. Depending on the route to market, procurement may be in the region of up to 6 months post agreement on requirements. Deployment, training and go-live would then follow. Additional human resource would likely be required to manage design, planning and implementation activity.</p> <p>The primary purpose of the exemption process is to provide a controlled mechanism for managing non-compliant requests for digital technology when strict adherence to the Council's Strategy or Technology Roadmap is either impractical,</p>

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		<p>too costly, or introduces unacceptable project risk at a given time. It is not a means to bypass the architecture entirely, but rather a formal acknowledgement and management of a deviation, with a clear plan for eventual compliance.</p> <p>Elected members are requested to raise any issues they have with the Council's technology with the ICT Service Desk so issues can be logged and actioned.</p> <p>Regular and ongoing engagement with Policy Leads and senior officers provides opportunities for addressing strategic technology matters.</p>