

SERVICE AND PARTNERSHIPS PERFORMANCE PANEL (SPECIAL)

Minutes of hybrid webcast meeting on
26 February 2026 at 10.00 a.m.

- Present
in County
Buildings: Councillors Philip Saxton (Chair) and Brian McGinley.
- Attending
Remotely: Councillors Ian Cochrane and Lee Lyons.
- Apologies: Councillors Kenneth Bell, Stephen Ferry, Gavin Scott and George Weir.
- Attending
in County
Buildings: S. Penman, Chief Executive; J. Bradley, Director of Communities and Transformation; K. Anderson, Assistant Director – Corporate Policy, Strategy and Performance; J. Tait, Acting Assistant Director – Communities; W. Carlaw, Service Lead – Democratic Governance; C. McGhee, Chief Internal Auditor; J. McClure, Committee Services Officer and C. McCallum, Clerical Assistant.
- Attending
Remotely: C. Caves, Chief Governance Officer; and M. McCart, Senior Consultant, EKOS.

Chair's Remarks.

The Chair

- (1) welcomed everyone to the meeting; and
- (2) outlined the procedures for conducting this meeting and advised that this meeting would be broadcast live.

1. Sederunt and Declarations of Interest.

The Chair called the Sederunt for the meeting and having called the roll, confirmed that that there were no declarations of interest by Members of the Panel in terms of Council Standing Order No. 17 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

2. International Ayr Show – Festival of Flight

There was submitted a [report](#) (issued) of 16 February 2026 by the Director of Communities and Transformation providing an update on the financial position in relation to the International Ayr Show 2025.

Comments were made by Members and questions raised and responded to by the Director of Communities and Transformation in relation to:

- (1) the £227,000 overspend being included in the £1.185m cost of delivering the 2024 Ayr Show;
- (2) the £493,000 cost of delivering the Ayr Show in 2025 excluding income and sponsorship;
- (3) the £590,000 request from reserves not being utilised as there was no draw down on reserves; and that the overspend was £98,000 which had been met from budgets within the directorate;
- (4) the Ayr Show going over budget for the past three years; and the Director of Communities and Transformation advised that the issue was uncontrollable income as it was unknown each year how much sponsorship would be achieved and how much money would be made through a range of other sources; that the overspend since last year had gone down considerably; that a team of officers worked extremely hard all year to do everything possible to reduce costs but, for an event of this size, there were variable costs and some costs rose each year; and that staff salaries were not included within the costs as the staff involved worked in other events and activities and not solely on the air show;
- (5) this authority investing in green energy and electric vans, however, organising an Ayr Show with no apparent green set off; and the Director of Communities and Transformation advised that the Ayr Show was about driving economic enterprise and spend in South Ayrshire and the event was putting the area on the map, however, last year the Red Arrows had flown for the first time using green fuel and used an environmentally substance to create the smoke patterns through extensive research from partners and officers in her team;
- (6) staff working tirelessly on this project with the resources available; Members requiring a rationale for why this event represented best value for the Council as these monies could be spent elsewhere; that the report lacked a significant amount of detail; that the small percentage of those surveyed who did not think the event was “very good” or “good” should have been asked why and what could be improved; that previous reports contained a breakdown of costs which was required by Members; that the Integrated Impact Assessment should have contained information such as the Red Arrows using green fuel; and that a two day event could not alone grow the local economy; and the Director of Communities and Transformation advised that she was unable to provide any more public detail due to some information being commercially sensitive; that more income was generated in 2025 from car parking and the food village; that accommodation for the air crew required to be booked a year in advance as all local hotels were fully booked during the Ayr show; and that she had requested that this report be submitted to this Panel at the financial close to provide a more up-to-date picture;
- (7) the implications of using monies provided from job vacancies; and the Director of Communities and Transformation advised that there was no deliberate holding of any vacancies but vacancy turnover was merely the gap between an officer resigning and the post being filled;

- (8) section 4.1 outlining that “other income achieved from a range of sources was £486,000” and that more information was required on this in order to properly scrutinise the report; and the Director of Communities and Transformation advised that members could be provided with areas where income was generated, however, values were commercially sensitive;
- (9) whether it was best value to the Council using existing budgets to reduce overspend; and the Director of Communities and Transformation advised that the overspend had been £98,000 which was less than previous years and that officers worked extremely hard to avoid an overspend, however, although more income was generated in 2025, the site infrastructure was more expensive;
- (10) that the monies utilised for the Ayr Show showed an increasing better picture each year, however, Members should be provided with the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) for scrutiny, more detail on the elements that were not commercially sensitive and details on whether more data would be collected from those attendees who stated that the Ayr Show was not a good experience for them; and the Director of Communities and Transformation advised that she would provide Members with the IIA and a list of income sources; and that for the 2026 event she would request the company carrying out the survey to obtain more information from those attendees who had not enjoyed the event as much;
- (11) congratulating the Director and her team on managing this event which was attended by thousands of people every year and generated interest for the area;
- (12) costs of running the Ayr Show for the last two years; and the Director of Communities and Transformation advised that in 2024 the overall cost of running the Ayr Show was £1.185m, including that generated from income and sponsorship; and in 2025 was £1.145m, however deducting all income and expenditure was a net cost to the Council of £493,000;
- (13) the survey containing “outliers” and what this related to; and the Director of Communities and Transformation advised that this referred to figures disproportionately different to the norm;
- (14) whether local hotels had provided information to the consultants carrying out the survey; and the Director of Communities and Transformation advised that she would confirm if this data was available; and outlined that in 2024 Council volunteers had carried out the surveys and thereafter it had been decided to appoint EKOS to carry this out and they had devised the survey and their staff carried it out as EKOS were very experienced and well respected in their field;
- (15) that the data from 2024 and 2025 was not comparable as different methodologies had been applied for the collection of the data; and that it was important to ensure that those collecting the data were aware of the principles and processes of collecting valid and reliable data and around the treatment of the data; and
- (16) requesting that the Director of Communities and Transformation provide further information for Panel Members on income and expenditure and whether hotel owners had been involved in the consultation; welcoming the substantial reduction in overspend year on year; and outlining that the event was value for money and beneficial to the local economy

The Panel, having thanked the Director of Communities and Transformation and her team for their work on the Ayr Show,

Decided: to note the budgetary position for the International Ayr Show in 2025.

The meeting ended at 10.40 a.m.