It has been a huge honour to be leader of North Ayrshire Council over recent months. The change of administration happened at the blink of an eye but we have been completely focused on delivering for the people of North Ayrshire from day one.

When we took over control of North Ayrshire Council on 30th August 2016, following the resignation of the previous SNP administration, we set an overarching aim of reducing inequality.

I am proud of what we have achieved in such a short period of time to achieve these aims and this manifesto sets out how we will continue to deliver a new vision for a Better North Ayrshire beyond May.

It is a manifesto that doesn’t accept the status quo, it is set to challenge it.

A Labour administration of North Ayrshire Council will not manage austerity. We won’t accept that poverty, low life expectancy, unemployment, an attainment gap between the richest and poorest is inevitable.

We will not just fight for an end to austerity but we will ensure that the resources available to North Ayrshire Council are utilised to their full potential, targeting them as effectively as possible to help North Ayrshire grow, to reduce the inequalities that exist within our communities and deliver equity of opportunity for all our people.

We have achieved so much in six short months and this manifesto sets that out. We now ask you for the opportunity to build on our achievements by electing Labour Councillors for your area thus giving us a full five year term to deliver our vision for a Better North Ayrshire.

On 4th May vote for your Labour candidates and together we will deliver a Better North Ayrshire for all of us.

Councillor Joe Cullinane
Leader, North Ayrshire Labour
Labour set an anti-austerity budget for 2017/18 that stops the cuts and invests an additional £12.3m in North Ayrshire.

Labour’s budget rejected planned cuts to supported study, school librarian services, North Ayrshire’s music service and school devolved budgets.

Labour’s budget rejected planned increases in special uplift charges and cemetery charges.

Labour’s budget rejected the SNP Government’s offer to cut funding for our Health and Social Care Partnership by £2.3m – instead we have increased its funding in 2017/18 by £5.5m – a huge £8m more than the SNP Government’s offer.

Labour’s £4m HSCP Challenge Fund will deliver innovative new models of care including a See and Treat Centre in the Three Towns to ease pressure on GP services and Mental Health community connectors in all six localities.

Labour’s budget invests over £200,000 to create a Community Empowerment Unit within the Council. This unit will increase community capacity to support our devolution proposals but also embed the principles of community empowerment throughout the council.

Labour’s budget has delivered the radical devolution of over £5m of services and capital spending to our communities;
• The devolution of the £1m Grounds Maintenance budget to communities
• The devolution of £1m of Health and Social Care funding to communities
• The creation of a £3m+ Community Investment Fund, which will be spent by communities through Participatory Budgeting on local priorities.

Labour’s budget invests up to £1.8m in anti-poverty measures including;
• £500,000 to extend our Financial Inclusion Programme with an online tool and providing it in HSCP settings
• Investment to develop a Community Food Plan
• £200,000 to develop a North Ayrshire Basic Income Pledge
• A dedicated post to support the development of North Ayrshire’s anti-poverty strategy, ‘Fair for All’
• A Challenge Poverty Fund

Labour’s budget invested £200,000 to create 20 new modern apprenticeships.

Under the SNP the roads budget was slashed. Labour’s budget provides an extra £1m in 2017/18 to improve North Ayrshire’s roads.

The “Save Our Ferry” campaign and Labour’s budget provides investment in the Ardrossan Harbour car park, which is part of the £15m investment plans that have been developed to retain the ferry service in Ardrossan and deliver a first class service to the people of Arran.

When Labour returned to power we increased North Ayrshire Council’s house building programme by 50%, meaning that by 2021 North Ayrshire Council will have built 750 new council houses.
We have secured an additional £4m from the Scottish Government at the end of 2016/17 to accelerate our house building plans and buy land in Kilwinning, Ardrossan and Skelmorlie for social housing developments by both NAC and Cunninghame Housing Association. This funding will give us additional opportunities to increase our building plan further.

The Labour administration reinstated investment in Kilwinning Academy, Irvine Royal Academy and Auchenharvie Academy that was cut by the SNP within a month of taking control of the Council. The initial agreed investment was secured through campaigning by Labour Councillors.

Labour has agreed a pilot to install solar panels on 500 council homes which will help tackle fuel poverty.

The Labour Council has agreed to launch an “Energy White Label” product in North Ayrshire, offering local residents and businesses lower energy bills. This model has successfully brought down energy prices in areas in England that have implemented it.

The Labour administration secured Living Wage accreditation for North Ayrshire Council and has been using the Council’s business relationships to promote its payment throughout the local economy.

Having secured Living Wage accreditation, the Labour administration then paid the new rate early effective from the date of announcement giving low paid council staff a pay boost before Christmas in 2016.

The Labour administration has signed up North Ayrshire Council and the Health and Social Care Partnership to the UNISON Ethical Care Charter – a positive move for both care clients and their workers.

Labour has initiated a review of the Council’s casual contracts, building on our work in opposition to move workers onto regular contracts with regular hours.

Labour Councillors campaigned against blacklisting resulting in companies who have blacklisted being banned from Council contracts.

Labour has adopted a Construction Charter, setting out our expectations of good working conditions for those working on council construction jobs.

Labour Councillors campaigned to ensure that North Ayrshire Council took a position of non-compliance on the Tories Trade Union Bill.

Under Labour, North Ayrshire Council has employed the first Family Business Advisor in Scotland.

Labour has approved plans to recruit a project officer to take forward regeneration plans for Lochshore and Stoneyholm Mill in Kilbirnie.

Labour’s cabinet has invested an initial £200,000 for an economic masterplan for Lochshore.

With North Ayrshire Citizens Advice Service ceasing their benefit tribunal representation service, the new Labour administration secured tribunal representation was available all North Ayrshire residents through North Ayrshire Council’s Money Matters team.
Our Record on North Ayrshire Council

Labour Councillors campaigned for investment in Largs Prom, which the Labour administration delivered alongside investment in Gallowgate Square.

When the SNP were about to give up on securing a future for the Millport Marine Biological Station, it was Labour who kept the fight going. The Station was saved and has since went from strength to strength.

Labour has approved North Ayrshire’s first district heating scheme, set for the high flats in Fullarton, Irvine.

When Labour took over the Council we reduced the number of Senior Councillors, saving the Council thousands of pounds.

The Labour administration invested £1m in fuel efficiency measures in 14 of the Council’s non-domestic properties. This investment is funded through prudential borrowing, however the fuel savings are greater than the loan charges making this is a spend to save project.

Labour have agreed the “Sustainable House” project in Corsehill, Kilwinning. This will build two fully sustainable homes with a view to learning lessons for future house building projects.

Labour has invested £100,000 to extend the Council’s environmental enforcement pilot – delivered following campaigning by Labour Councillors against dog fouling and litter.

Labour has brought North Ayrshire’s CCTV system back in-house – securing its future and investing to ensure it is fit for purpose.

Labour Councillors proposed North Ayrshire’s no eviction Bedroom Tax policy.

North Ayrshire Council was the first Scottish Local Authority to ‘reclassify’ rooms so that some didn’t have to pay the Bedroom Tax, thanks to a Labour motion at the Council.

Labour has approved the plans for the Tarryholme Drive development. This will provide a new learning disability care unit with additional services for mental health. This is the former Red Cross House site, a unit that Labour Councillors campaigned to save.

Ayrshire College has the first Mental Health and Wellbeing Adviser in a Scottish College – a position funded through a partnership of the North Ayrshire HSCP, the NHS and the College and brought about by campaigning by Labour Councillors.

Labour has approved the plans to site North Ayrshire’s new Additional Support Needs school at Auchenharvie, Stevenston.

Labour has delivered guaranteed apprenticeship places for young care leavers.

Labour’s support for care leavers includes a mentoring programme and work experience opportunities.

Labour has agreed to publish all outcomes for care leavers in relevant council reports – shining a light on the attainment gap between care leavers and their peers allowing a renewed focus on closing it.

The Labour Council has signed the Scottish Care Leavers Covenant.
Labour has signed the Ash Charter – a commitment to making all council grounds smoke free.

Labour has started moving the Council’s holiday school meal programme out of school buildings and into community facilities. The first stages of this have shown that more children will take part if they do not have to attend school to do so.

Labour Councillors campaigned for a new Largs Academy, and it is now being built.

Labour has approved North Ayrshire’s Financial Inclusion Programme, a £3m scheme that will tackle debt, poverty and maximise people’s incomes. This scheme includes;

• A low-cost short term loan, provided through 1st Alliance Credit Union, to offer an alternative to payday loans
• Low cost credit to purchase products, via 1st Alliance Credit Union, to offer an alternative to high cost stores such as Brighthouse
• Investment in fuel poverty initiatives
• Improved welfare rights services

Labour’s Debbusters campaign led to the establishment of North Ayrshire’s Non-Standard Lending working group. The group’s recommendations resulted in many of the proposals in the Financial Inclusion Programme but from it the Council also invested £50,000 in 1st Alliance Credit Union to allow them to grow their membership.

Labour has played a key role in the Council’s humanitarian efforts – making the first calls to support Syrian refugees and becoming the first local authority in Scotland to provide a home to unaccompanied children left stranded in Calais.

In opposition, Labour Councillors ensured that North Ayrshire Council took a clear position of opposition against fracking.

The Labour Council took part in the 2016 Poverty Alliance’s Challenge Poverty Week – tackling the stigma of poverty but also highlighting the excellent work being done by volunteers across our area.

Labour Councillors passed a motion at North Ayrshire Council to support the WASPI campaign.

Labour Councillors banned circuses from using animals in their shows in North Ayrshire.

Labour Councillors scrapped the council policy that saw schools paying letting charges to hire their own schools outwith school hours.

When the previous SNP Council cut funding to North Ayrshire Women’s Aid, Labour Councillors, who opposed the cut, got a clause removed from the contract that would have prevented Women’s Aid from obtaining external funding.

Labour Councillors have campaigned against bus cuts, saving some local services from being withdrawn.

Labour Council Leader Joe Cullinane promised that he wouldn’t spend his time behind a desk in Irvine and would instead get out across North Ayrshire to visit community groups. He has kept that commitment, visiting groups from every area. In six months, he has done more visits than his predecessor.
Your Local Labour Candidates

Ward 1 Irvine West
Ian Clarkson & Louise McPhater

Ward 2 Irvine East
John Easdale & Irene Oldfather

Ward 3 Kilwinning
Joe Cullinane & Donald Reid

Ward 4 Stevenston
Jimmy Miller & John Sweeney

Ward 5 Ardrossan and Arran
Claire McGuire

Ward 6 Dalry and West Kilbride
Paul Reid

Ward 7 Kilbirnie and Beith
John Bell & James Robson

Ward 8 North Coast and Cumbrae
Alex Gallagher

Ward 9 Saltcoats
Jim Montgomerie & Valerie Reid

Ward 10 Irvine South
Robert Foster & David O’Neill
Labour introduced the Council’s House Building Strategy in 2011 and when we returned to power last year we increased it. We will continue to look at all avenues to increase it further and pledge to increase the programme to 1000 new council homes by the end of the next Council term.

Social Landlords (Housing Associations) receive a larger housing grant from the Scottish Government than local authorities do. Labour will lobby the SNP Government for parity which will allow North Ayrshire Council to build more council houses.

Whilst there is a social housing shortage across North Ayrshire, there is a housing crisis on Arran with a lack of social housing and average houses prices of £230,000 meaning that businesses cannot fill job vacancies on the island. Labour will build council houses on Arran.

For too many young people, they cannot access social housing and cannot afford the deposit for a mortgage so are forced into the private rented sector. Labour will establish a Private Housing Sector working group, with private landlords and private rented tenants represented on it, which will be tasked with providing better quality of housing, cheaper rents and more housing options for those forced into the private rented sector.

Labour will also consider creating a ‘North Ayrshire Living Rent’ accreditation scheme – the ‘Living Rent’ being calculated through a formula between average earnings in North Ayrshire and property values.

Labour will help make home ownership an achievable ambition for young people in North Ayrshire through a municipal mortgage scheme, offering first time buyers an affordable mortgage with a smaller deposit than currently required by high street banks.

Labour will look to extend the Council’s solar panel programme beyond the initial 500 home pilot.

Labour will build upon the environmental standards of the ‘Sustainable House’ project to ensure all new council house builds are as energy efficient as possible.
Labour will continue to invest in fuel poverty initiatives, particularly spend to save schemes which ease pressure on council budgets.

A Labour council will deliver more district heating schemes throughout North Ayrshire.

Labour will continue to tackle dog fouling and littering through the Council’s environmental enforcement team.

Labour will set up a ‘Bin It’ campaign to reduce litter and dog fouling. This will involve a community grant scheme – the more that is put in bins, the more grant funding that will be available for community groups in that locality.

Labour Councillors will seek to use the Local Development Plan 2 to ban fracking in North Ayrshire.

A Labour Council will deliver an annual Carbon Budget each year, setting out the Council’s aim to reduce carbon emissions and provide better air quality.

A Labour Council will seek to take action on unmaintained land, including the use of compulsory purchase orders to bring land back into productive use.

Communities throughout North Ayrshire have been let down by the current rigged bus market. A lack of regulation means that private bus companies can withdraw or cut services with little or no notice. A Labour Council will put the interests of communities before bus company profits and will develop plans for a municipal bus company to deliver local bus services that meet the needs of local communities.

A Labour council will support a publicly owned and run ScotRail.

Labour will improve North Ayrshire’s cycle network by investing in the current infrastructure and seek a better connection between Kilwinning and Kilbirnie on the network.

We will continue to invest in improving North Ayrshire’s roads.

Labour will deliver the B714 re-alignment.

A Labour Council will explore options for establishing a Co-operative Energy Company to boost investment in renewable energy.

Labour recognises that the A737 is a key route, we will campaign for improvements across the whole route, including the Beith and Renfrewshire sections, to ensure safer journeys with more reliable travel times. We will also seek improvements that offer alternative routes to prevent heavy traffic building on Dalry Road and Stevenston Road in Kilwinning.
Better Education

Labour will continue to invest in improving our school buildings, including our primary schools.

Labour will ensure a financially sustainable future for North Ayrshire’s Professional Learning Academy.

Labour will invest in early years provision and increase access to wrap-around childcare to provide greater flexibility for parents.

Labour believes that co-operative and mutual models of childcare could help provide flexible wrap-around childcare for parents.

Under Labour, North Ayrshire will provide inclusive education and will ensure that all schools are provided with LGBT+ awareness training.

Labour will protect school counsellors to ensure our young people have support for mental health problems.

Children who are able to have a good breakfast learn better. Labour will look to extend the provision of school breakfast clubs in North Ayrshire including exploring options for a Co-operative Breakfast Club model.

A Labour Council will continue to move the Council’s school holiday meal programme out into community facilities.

Under the SNP, cuts were made to school support staff. Labour will make it a priority to protect the number of quality support staff in our schools.

Labour will oppose the SNP’s plans to centralise the governance of school education.

A Labour Council will ensure that school teachers are supported to make best use of the Pupil Equity Fund and help them comply with procurement and employment legislation.

Labour will develop proposals to tackle digital poverty, which affects young people’s ability to carry out some aspects of school work.

Labour will invest in transitional support into Higher and Further Education for our school leavers.

Labour will promote financial literacy in our schools by working in partnership with local credit unions to promote savings accounts to all Secondary school pupils.
Better Economy

Labour signed off the business case for the Ayrshire Growth Deal and if re-elected we are committed to working with East and South Ayrshire Councils to deliver the ambitious plans.

Labour recognises the need for economic development in the Garnock Valley. We are committed to working with the communities in Kilbirnie, Dalry and Beith, to deliver economic regeneration and jobs for the area. We will, for example deliver an economic masterplan for Lochshore, an area let down badly by the SNP.

Reviving our high streets into successful retail and community hubs is vitally important and we believe more should be done to fill empty shop units. Labour will therefore introduce a ‘Pop-up shop’ policy which will provide businesses and community groups free, short term leases on empty council owned high street units.

North Ayrshire Council had to pay over £600,000 for the Tories Apprenticeship Levy in 2017/18. The SNP Scottish Government have decided that this money will not be retained by local authorities in Scotland but will instead go to the quango, Skills Development Scotland. £600,000 is the equivalent of 60 modern apprenticeships. Labour will continue to lobby the SNP Government to allow Councils to retain the Levy to support their apprenticeship programme.

Labour will review the Council’s modern apprenticeship programme to expand it, ensure it provides good quality apprenticeships and that it pays a fair wage.

Labour will double the number of Employability Hubs from 3 to 6, ensuring the provision of this service in all six localities in North Ayrshire.

We will work with trade unions, parliamentary colleagues and other partners to establish an Industrial Strategy taskforce that will help develop an industrial strategy to create jobs in North Ayrshire.

Labour will continue to support the regeneration of our town centres with investment in infrastructure but also increased support for small businesses.

Labour will promote co-operatives and community ownership models and ensure the Council’s Business Support Team are equipped to expand the sector to deliver economic growth.

A Labour Council will put Inclusive Growth, which benefits the many not the few, at the heart of our economic development policies.

A Labour Council will sign up to the Fair Tax Mark to promote tax transparency and will use our procurement policies to ensure contractors are paying the right amount of tax in this country.

Labour believes that a local marketing co-operative could help promote our town centres and we will look to set one up.

A Vision For A Better North Ayrshire
A Labour Council will seek the devolution of the Work Programme to local government so that we can tailor employability services to the needs of our people and our economy. We will lobby the Scottish Government to deliver that devolution of power.

Labour will establish a North Ayrshire skills forum where schools, skills providers and employers can work together on training and jobs.

Labour will introduce the North Ayrshire Youth Guarantee – a guarantee of a positive destination for all 16 and 17 year olds in North Ayrshire.
Better Health

Labour will continue to protect funding for the Health and Social Care Partnership.

Labour rejected the SNP’s offer to cut the Health and Social Care Partnership budget. We have invested in Health and Social Care and we are now lobbying NHS Ayrshire and Arran and the Scottish Government to do the same. If re-elected we will continue to campaign for much needed investment in Health and Social Care.

Under Labour, the North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership will continue to invest in innovative schemes that will provide greater access to health and care services whilst easing the pressure on health budgets.

North Ayrshire Council already has a Carers Champion, Youth Champion and Veterans Champion. In the new term Labour will introduce a Mental Health Champion and an Older Peoples Champion who will look after the interests of these groups.

Under Labour, every council policy will be subject to a health inequality impact assessment.

Labour will ensure all our beaches are fully accessible for people with disabilities.

Labour will make North Ayrshire a Dementia friendly area.

We believe that social care services could be delivered through co-operative models and a Labour Council will explore options for workers social care co-operatives in North Ayrshire.

Labour will create a mental health network to provide peer to peer support for those suffering from mental health.

Labour will continue to support the work of the North Ayrshire Drug and Alcohol Partnership and the projects it supports.

Labour believes that the third sector has a key role to play in tackling health inequalities and a Labour Council will seek to work in partnership with the third sector by investing in community based health and social care initiatives that will support people in their own communities.
Better
For Workers

A Labour Council will not comply with the Tories Anti-Trade Union Bill.

Labour in North Ayrshire has made great progress on the Living Wage but we will continue to do more to extend its payment across the North Ayrshire economy, using the Council’s work with local businesses and contractors to achieve that.

Labour will continue to pay the annual Living Wage uplift from the date of announcement.

Labour’s review of casual contracts will bring down the number that was held under the SNP, which consistently stood at 800 plus during this council term.

Labour will work with our trade union colleagues for improved working conditions across North Ayrshire and will develop a “Fair Work Charter” for North Ayrshire in partnership with them. We will promote the Charter to local employers through an accreditation scheme.

Benefit sanctions can prevent people from seeking employment and lead them to destitution. A Labour Council will set up a working group, and invite the DWP to join it, with the aim of reducing benefit sanctions in North Ayrshire, including exploring options for creating more and better support mechanisms for benefit claimants including within jobcentres themselves.

The Labour administration have made an offer to settle North Ayrshire Council’s outstanding equal pay claims. Equal pay has been a stain on local government for too long and if re-elected, Labour will ensure that all claims are settled.

A Labour Council will support and encourage the employee co-ownership model of working which helps distribute wealth to employees and encourages long service.

Under the SNP public contracts continued to be awarded to companies who blacklisted workers. A Labour Council will take a no tolerance stance, unequivocally banning them from council contracts and challenging the Scottish Futures Trust to do the same.
Better Communities

Labour has already taken participatory budgeting to the next stage and we will look to expand it even further devolving power down to communities, building on the £5m we have already devolved.

Labour will establish an independent social economy network to develop North Ayrshire’s third sector and ensure implementation of North Ayrshire Council’s Social Enterprise Strategy.

A Labour council will allow local social enterprises to apply for ‘deferred shares’ which may allow them to obtain external funding to grow their operations and create jobs.

Through the use of an online budget simulator, Labour will introduce a proper community consultation process over the council’s budget, allowing all residents to set a virtual council budget based on their own, and their communities’, priorities.

Labour will create a ‘Community App’ which will allow North Ayrshire residents to check for local events, groups and clubs on their smartphone and tablets.

Labour will expand the Council’s volunteering programme by giving every council employee a ‘volunteering day’ in addition to their annual leave.

A Labour council will ensure a robust community asset transfer policy which supports long term, sustainable transfers of community assets. We will also look to assist communities to take ownership of key privately owned assets which are in disrepair.

Labour will launch ‘Crowdfund North Ayrshire’, a crowdfunding initiative that will allow community groups and social enterprises to raise money.

North Ayrshire. Labour will seek to establish an Arts and Culture board, with representatives from key industry bodies on it, to develop an Arts and Culture Strategy for North Ayrshire.

A Labour Council will seek to use new planning laws to restrict the number of fixed odds betting terminals and payday lenders on our high streets.

A Labour Council will support community ownership of football teams and other sports clubs.

Labour will make North Ayrshire a child friendly area and embed young people in out locality partnerships so they have a voice.

Labour will also introduce a Young Mayor, elected each year.

Labour will hold a review into our Anti-Social Behaviour procedures to ensure we support the victims of anti-social behaviour as effectively as possible.

A Labour Council will extend the lifespan of local cemeteries, by increasing their capacity to ensure that local families can continue to have loved ones buried in their local area.
Labour will use the investment in our Universal Basic Income pledge to trial it, providing the necessary evidence to lobby the UK and Scottish Government’s for support for a wider North Ayrshire pilot.

Labour’s Poverty Challenge Fund will be invested in collaboration with communities to support projects that will tackle poverty.

Labour’s Community Food Plan will help tackle food poverty and ease the pressure on the North Ayrshire Foodbank.

Labour will look to protect, and expand, our Financial Inclusion Programme.

A Labour Council will continue to invest in anti-poverty measures, including developing plans to tackle Period Poverty and the Cost of the School Day.

A Labour Council will proactively support the rights of EU nationals to stay and work in our area, opposing any moves to remove these rights through a Tory hard Brexit.

Labour will continue to deliver on our humanitarian commitment to supporting refugees fleeing persecution. We will fulfil our commitment to support 100 Syrian refugees and will happily provide sanctuary to more unaccompanied children.

North Ayrshire’s Throughcare service is delivered out of two ex-council houses brought together in Saltcoats. It is not fit for purpose and Labour will invest in improved Throughcare facilities to give care leavers the best support possible to reach a positive destination.

Labour will continue to improve outcomes for care leavers including the delivery of more guaranteed apprenticeship places.

Labour will introduce a Champions Board to improve support for care experienced young people.

A Labour Council will always take part in Challenge Poverty Week. We believe we should never hide poverty, we should challenge it. This campaign week will also highlight the excellent work being done by volunteers in North Ayrshire.
North Ayrshire Labour has delivered the most radical, bold anti-austerity council budget seen across the UK in 2017/18.

In six months we have reviewed the Council’s finances to release reserves, which doubled under the SNP in percentage terms, of £6m to stop the cuts, protect jobs and save services. We have allocated the 2016/17 projected underspend to help deliver a budget that will invest an additional £12.3m in North Ayrshire.

Labour’s budget:
- Rejects cuts to important frontline services such as our children’s education
- Rejects increases in cemetery and special uplift charges
- Increases the HSCP funding by £5.5m
- Invests £1.8m in anti-poverty
- Devolves over £5m of services and funding to our communities, including the creation of a £3m+ Community Investment Fund to be spent by communities on their local priorities.

Only by electing Labour Councillors can we challenge austerity, protect jobs and services and instead invest in North Ayrshire’s future. If you elect a Labour Council;

Labour will build a broad community campaign against cuts to council budgets.

Under Labour, North Ayrshire Council will accept no budget offers made before the Scottish Parliament has set its budget. Our budget setting date will therefore be after the Scottish Parliament sets its own.

Consecutive Government’s, of all colours, have used PFI schemes to fund capital projects. This continues to be the case with capital projects such as the new Largs Campus being funded through the SNP’s NPD model. These schemes may deliver capital projects but they are often an expensive way of funding them - and we now have the borrowing powers in Scotland to offer an alternative funding should the SNP Government have the political will to do so. However, here in North Ayrshire the Council has secured a £2million recurring annual saving on loan charges by refinancing loans to take advantage of current low interest rates and we believe there are opportunities to make savings by re-financing, and possibly buying back, the Council’s PPP contracts. However, this will require the permission of the Scottish Government to bring the debt ‘onto the books’. Labour will therefore develop a PPP re-financing proposal, including examining the use of the Public Works Loan Board to secure the finances to buy-out the contracts, and seek the Scottish Government’s approval for it.

Under the SNP, North Ayrshire Council’s un-earmarked reserves almost doubled despite the council making millions of pounds of cuts to jobs and services. A Labour council will keep un-earmarked reserves at 2% of the council’s revenue budget. This will ensure that, while we have cash in reserve to deal with emergencies and the continued threat of SNP and Tory austerity, we will invest every pound possible on jobs and services for the people and communities of North Ayrshire.

The SNP increased spending on consultants massively and spent thousands of pounds sending their own councillors to fancy award dinners. The Labour administration has brought this extravagant spending under control and we will continue to do so. Under Labour council resources will be spent on jobs and public services, not nights out for councillors like under the SNP.

A Labour Council will continue to support Unite the Union’s ‘Drop the Debt’ campaign which seeks to a debt amnesty on pre-devolution debt owed by Scottish Councils to the Treasury.