

KA LEISURE BOARD REPORT

KA LEISURE BOARD MINUTES

Meeting	KA Leisure Board Meeting
Date/Venue	29th May 2025 – 10am, 22 Quarry Road, Irvine, KA12 0TH
Present:	<p>Directors</p> <p>Councillor John Sweeney (Chairperson) Councillor Jim Montgomerie Councillor Jean McClung Lorraine Tulloch Ross Glover Anne Todd</p> <p>Employees</p> <p>Malcolm McPhail (C.E.O) Laura Barrie (Head of Active Communities) Kirsty Jordan (Head of HR) John McMillan (GM Portal) Scott Morrison (Head of Strategic Planning and Development) Rachel Williams (Head of Projects and Revenue Management) Kyle Lewis (GM Garnock) Stephanie Napier (PA to CEO) Notes</p> <p>NAC</p> <p>Rhonda Leith – Head of Service (Connected Communities)</p>
Apologies	David Hammond – Executive Director (Communities and Housing)

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1. Apologies

Apologies were received from David Hammond.

2. Minutes of Meeting held on 29th May 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th February were approved.

1. Matters Arising/Action Points

Rachel Williams provided an update on the efficiencies project confirming that main focus was on operational efficiencies covering several areas such as pricing structure and reviewing supplier costs, ensuring that the best price is paid for any services procured. Rachel reported that rotas were being reviewed to ensure to ensure the correct number of staff are in place and are matched against throughput. Councillor Sweeney questioned how posts that are being covered through absence; Rachel confirmed that any cover required would be done through backfill, checking whether cover can be carried out by someone already on shift to reduce any additional costs. Additionally, Rachel reported that the fitness class timetable was under review to ensure that classes operate at full capacity and that attendance is maximised. It was also reported that work was being carried out in partnership with Kirsty Jordan and the HR team to look at overtime rates and allowances and a further update would be provided at future Board meetings as the project progresses.

Anne Todd asked if any training had been provided to senior managers on Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as can be seen by the new Performance Strategy, it has been featuring often. Malcolm McPhail confirmed that although no formal training had

been provided; that he had been coaching AI into the business since he arrived with Scott Morrison as his first one to one pupil and filtering this through the team, ensuring that it featured in every team meeting. Malcolm added that AI and Agile methodology had been used within the Covid Strategy and had continued since then. Anne detailed that she was familiar with AI as it was previously used by NAC; Laura Barrie added that it would have previously been named as a strength-based approach.

A KPI update was requested as part of the action points and Scott confirmed this would be covered later in the meeting with the new reporting format beginning in the first quarter of the new financial year. Anne added that the board had requested more detail/clarity in terms of income and expenditure breakdowns, airing her frustrations that consultancy costs had been requested on many occasions but not yet provided. Malcolm requested clarity on whether it was only the consultancy costs that Anne was requesting; Anne clarified that it was consultancy expenditure alongside any other areas that might be important for the Board to know. Councillor Sweeney added that he was impressed and happy with the detail that had been provided in the recent papers.

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4. Department Reports

Malcolm advised that as documented in the Board papers, most Departmental Reports would be written only with any questions to be directed to the associated managers by email.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report

Councillor Sweeney raised concern over the increase in bullying and harassment outlined in the recent HSE survey results, noting the implications for workplace safety and the importance of effective training to improve safety culture. Laura responded that Sarah Shimmen, Workplace Wellbeing Partner, had led the delivery and analysis of the HSE survey and would normally have presented the findings directly to the Board, but in her absence had prepared a summary for Laura to share. Laura highlighted that survey participation had increased by 38%, which likely contributed to the higher reported figures, and reported that discussions had taken place at recent senior meetings to highlight key elements of the findings and consider how these could be addressed across staff groups to implement areas for improvement. Work is underway to revise the bullying and harassment policy, alongside introducing a blended training approach to raise awareness and strengthen safety culture. Laura also stressed the importance of staff providing honest feedback, recognising that while some results may appear negative, they provide meaningful insight to inform improvement. Next steps will include Sarah producing a full summary of the findings for organisation-wide sharing and dissemination, as well as supporting the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Group in developing a 12-month action plan. Laura also confirmed that the Group had resumed meetings to address safety issues and that colleagues would be working internally to ensure the annual training calendar reflects and addresses the issues raised.

A discussion was held regarding the rise in falls on the ice rink and recent near drownings. John McMillan explained that avoiding incidents on the

ice is particularly difficult and that the majority of near drownings were from the fun night sessions with children regularly being rescued when falling off the inflatable. Councillor Sweeney asked if a lesson learned column could be added into future reports. Laura responded that as the Health & Safety report is a different report format to other departmental reports it may be possible due to the alignment with the KPI framework. Anne questioned whether staff were still receiving a regular newsletter; Scott confirmed that regular updates are sent to staff, and the Board could be included in this mailing list.

Business Report

Councillor Sweeney asked multiple questions regarding the Business paper including more information on any significant variances and whether we were ready for the audit. Rachel responded giving more detail on variances, adding that year end was still being finalised, but the figures would not move by any substantial amount. Rachel highlighted an error made by Brian Wright in other funded projects which was raised at the last Board meeting; a significant item had been double counted on the spreadsheet therefore the variance would not be an actual variance but a mistaken budget. In terms of supplies and services Rachel detailed that additional retention software had been purchased to support the customer journey. Rachel discussed ongoing increased cost pressures related to chemicals and cleaning supplies, which are currently being explored as part of the efficiencies project. Rachel added that a recent change in the waste supplier will save the company circa £10,000. Property costs have also been explored and the whole company has been more operationally efficient in terms of managing heats and lights etc.

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Leisure Report

Operational improvements in golf course management were discussed, and concern was raised regarding the retention of the recently recruited golf course staff, as they did not stay long after being hired. It was confirmed that Susan Kelly has been investigating alternative operational methods that could lead to cost savings and improved performance. The recent uptake of golf by the younger generation was discussed and the best way to retain younger members. Scott reported that a meeting had been organised with Scottish Golf to discuss how to support clubs to continue recruiting young people.

Councillor Sweeney thanked KA Leisure staff for their work on hosting the curling championships and the work in response to the storm. The replacement roof at Auchendarvie was discussed and Councillor Sweeney expressed frustration over the prolonged timeline for the necessary repairs, and particularly the lack of communication. Rhonda Leith reported on behalf of NAC that the delay in project implementation is attributed to difficulties in reaching agreements with insurers and getting the necessary schedules and tenders out. Rhonda detailed that the roof was expected to be repaired temporarily by October, but the roof replacement would not commence until January 2026 with an intended opening date between May-September 2026. Rhonda confirmed the opening date was out with KA Leisure's control, but all efforts were being made by North Ayrshire to open the pool as soon as possible. The significant loss of income from the pool being closed was outlined at circa £15k per month due to disruptions in swimming programmes and memberships. The difficulties and impact for customers having to travel to different sites was also highlighted.

Scott provided an overview of the new KeepMe platform describing it as a retention tool which includes features for demographic breakdowns of the membership base and connects to the CRM system, to create automated communication

with members. Scott added that part of the new strategy is to improve the customer journey, and the platform would be helpful to deliver on this area.

Community Sport Report

The Champions for Change Programme was discussed, and it was reported that an additional £12,000 has been allocated to run the programme in secondary schools this year, targeting youths with addiction issues. Scott detailed a recent success story that saw a pupil being supported through 8 weeks of training and resulted in the pupil telling his story at local primary schools with the intent to roll out to secondary schools next year. Councillor Sweeney responded congratulating the team on the ongoing work and adding similar success had been seen with the collaborative work between North Ayrshire Connected Communities and KA Leisure which made a significant contribution to reduce anti-social behaviour at Haycocks primary school. Scott added that a similar project would be commencing at the new Montgomerie Park primary school that had been a target for vandalism in recent months.

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People Report

Kirsty discussed the progress on the updating of policies including any affected by the recent changes in law regarding sexual harassment. Kirsty also provided detail on the new E-learning platform; Pro-compliance, that has been put in place to ensure there is base training for staff with all employees assigned mandatory modules which will cover bullying and harassment, sexual harassment/prevention as the core modules. The platform has been rolled out to all staff and any new starts should be assigned modules to complete in their 4 weeks of employment as part of the induction process.

Councillor Sweeney requested information on whether staff were still being employed under zero-hour contracts. Kirsty responded that the organisation employs a mix of staff types, including permanent, fixed-term, and relief staff, with the latter coming under a zero-hour contract. Kirsty confirmed that there had been a recent focus on monitoring the relief population and exploring alternative roles for them, aiming to reduce the number of relief staff who will always be required on a minimum basis as they are in place to provide short notice cover when centres are struggling.

The Board noted performance across all business areas.

5. KPI Framework Report

Laura provided an update on the KPI framework detailing that the team are working on finalising the framework and linking it to a live dashboard that will be ready by the end of June, allowing for real-time data tracking and comparisons. Laura discussed the concern regarding the current reports being too retrospective, focusing on data from three to four months ago, which does not provide timely insights for decision-making so the new reporting format will alleviate this concern.

Targets were discussed, and Laura confirmed that a final column would be added to the framework, linking each area to its own live dashboard. She

explained that “live” data would reflect figures updated to a specific date each month. By way of example, she noted that a target for fitness memberships could be set at 10%, with a threshold in place so that if the figure dropped below 5%, it would be flagged for attention. Laura added that the live dashboard would compare current year data against both the previous year’s performance and agreed targets, providing a much more meaningful, at-a-glance view of how the organisation is performing.

The Board noted performance across the business area.

6. Gender Pay Gap Report

Kirsty summarised, and the Board noted the Company Gender Pay Gap report which will be available on the company website and submitted to the Government Equalities office in line with regulation.

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7. 2 Year Strategy – Part 1

Considering limited time, Malcolm agreed to condense his summary of the 2 Year Strategy and following an agreement in principle by the Board they will all be invited to attend an upcoming Strategy Roadshow when Malcolm and Scott will be visiting centres to present the strategy to staff. Malcolm also offered 1-1 meetings with Directors and small groups to run through the Strategy in more detail.

Malcolm detailed that the strategy is an amalgam of multiple strategies that are currently running and have been pulled together under the appreciative inquiry and agile methodology framework. The almost live document will evolve with constant adjustments; 6 incarnations over a 2-year period and was described by Malcolm as unique and readable for partners, customers and staff. It puts down on paper what KA have been working on and trying to achieve over the past 3 years and will help with understanding over the relationship with NAC. Scott reported that refinements are required on the document such as a more detailed explanation of appreciative inquiry and agile methodology to ensure understanding of the document's creation as if no context is provided then this may not be easily understood by the public. The appendix of the strategic document will be finalised once the end of the accounts has been completed, with a target timeline of September-October for the annual report and a note from the Board Chairman will be included.

Malcolm asked the Board to review the document and provide any feedback. Anne suggested that as it's the performance strategy it may be useful to have the KPI's visible, even as part of the appendix, Scott agreed to investigate this option. Lorraine Tulloch noted that she had some general observations, one being that the public may not

understand the design, discovery, dream element and Malcolm replied that these titles would require to be described in layman's terms to ensure all round understanding.

As requested by Councillor Sweeney, Malcolm moved on to summarise the Action plan that will see the Strategy/Board Strategy come to life. Malcolm detailed that each section will be broken down to 1-5 areas that will then have up to 5 additional work threads (25 in total/max) that will become the work programme. In terms of the Board strategy, this will reference the O'Donnell's report and can be linked to this through reference numbers, ensuring all updates are documented and accessible. Malcolm explained that the governance/strategy work would go through the Audit committee, who will likely require to meet more regularly as the work threads commence. Councillor Sweeney requested that subcommittee membership is paid attention to as an action point to ensure representation is ample and varied for the groups, considering the current Director numbers are minimal as Board recruitment is underway.

A discussion was held on whether the Board strategy should be a standalone document with separate documentation which could possibly have greater detail included. It was agreed that it may be a good idea to reference the Board strategy in the main strategy document with minimal detail as it currently sits, and the Audit Committee would work from a separate strategy document that would be an expanded version. Lorraine Tulloch added that the Board must be realistic about the length of time some of the threads may take up and prioritise for optimum delivery.

The Board noted the work to date on the Performance Strategy 25/26.

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8. Wellbeing Alliance Update

Laura reports that two of the CPP pillars, Work and Wellbeing, have combined to deliver a pilot project that links employability training, volunteering, and wider wellbeing. The pilot involves 28 partners and takes a targeted locality approach, engaging 450 households in the Kilwinning area. A series of workshops and sessions are currently being delivered, including a formal employability programme developed with Ayrshire College, DWP, NAC, and other partners. This programme covers areas such as customer service and first aid, followed by structured work placements delivered in partnership with Kilwinning Sports Club. The pilot also signposts the community to existing services, activities, and opportunities, while adding a new layer of collaboration to identify gaps and jointly create solutions. Laura notes that the collaborative approach is working well, and a new distribution network is now in place, KPN Kilwinning Partner Network - enabling partners to engage at a level that suits their organisation.

Laura reported that the next steps include a series of community family fun days, beginning next week, which will act as a precursor to more formal engagement activities designed to strengthen community involvement and support pathways into employability.

Looking ahead, Laura explained that the aim is to replicate the success of the Kilwinning pilot and scale it across other localities, while taking on board feedback from local partners to refine and strengthen community planning. She emphasised the need to remain mindful of the large number of ongoing initiatives and the importance of streamlining efforts to avoid duplication.

The Steering Group meetings were discussed and the eagerness for some partners to start delivering rather than focussing on repetitive discussions that were slower than expected in progressing to Board level and reach the point of actual delivery. Concern was raised about demonstrating tangible impacts on health metrics such as healthy life expectancy and mortality rates, especially in the context of the Alliance's existence and the pilots implemented. The discussion highlighted that the annual report would capture both quantitative and qualitative data, relying on case studies and personal experiences to convey the impact of the initiatives.

9. NALTS – Striking Off Application

Stephanie Napier reported that at previous meetings the Board had reached a consensus to close the NALTS trading company account due to its inactivity. Stephanie had initiated the process of account closure and asked that the Board sign the required document to finalise the process. Stephanie explained that the company would be

closed within 3-4 months following the signed document being received by Companies House. The Board agreed the trading account should be closed and 4 Directors signed the document.

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10. AOB

Councillor Sweeney reported that he has decided to commit to the Board for a further 2 years, thanking everyone for their commitment and contribution to the morning's meetings.

As requested by Anne, Kirsty provided an update on Board recruitment confirming that following some initial teams' meetings with interested candidates, 5 Director applications had been received so far but there was still a couple of days before the recruitment window closed. Kirsty detailed that out of the 5 candidates, only 1 had shown any interest in the Chair position.

Ross Glover proposed Councillor Sweeney as the new chairperson. The motion was seconded by Councillor McClung. Councillor Sweeney accepted the role, and the board then unanimously agreed to appoint them as chairperson. Councillor Sweeney requested that the remaining Directors consider potential for a Vice Chairperson for the

next Board meeting, adding that it would be useful to work with someone already on the Board.

Anne noted that the Board report authors names did not feature in the recent papers, questioning if there was any reasoning behind this. It was confirmed that when the reports transitioned to the more uniform format, unfortunately this must have been missed but would be added back in for future reports as would be useful for directing any comments/questions.

Ross questioned whether the recent introduction of booking sanctions had been effective in combatting the problem with members not cancelling classes. Scott responded that it appears to be supporting attendances which have seen an improvement, but that David Stevenson could possibly come along to a future meeting to give a more detailed analysis.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is Thursday 4th September 2025.