

Cabinet
6 May 2014

Irvine, 6 May 2014 - At a meeting of the Cabinet of North Ayrshire Council at 2.30 p.m.

Present

Willie Gibson, Marie Burns, John Bruce, Anthea Dickson, Tony Gurney, Alan Hill and Ruth Maguire.

Also Present

Donald Reid.

In Attendance

E. Murray, Chief Executive; C. Hatton, Corporate Director, K. Yeomans, Head of Service (Development Planning), J. Miller, Senior Planning, Transportation and Regeneration Manager and A. Adrain, Interim Head of Housing (Development and Environment); L. Friel, Head of Finance and Corporate Services, T. Reaney (Procurement Manager), D. Tate, Senior Manager (Property Management and Investment), A. Blakely, IT Manager and G. Macgregor, Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development (Finance and Corporate Support); S. Quinn, Head of Service (Development) (Education and Skills); A. Fraser, Head of Democratic and Administration Services, A. Hale, Health Improvement Officer, A. Woodison, Communications Officer and A. Little, Committee Services Officer (Chief Executive's Service).

Chair

Councillor Gibson in the Chair.

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest by Members in terms of Standing Order 16 and Section 5 of the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

2. Minutes

As a result of the public holiday on 5 May 2014, the Call In Period expires on Wednesday 7 May 2014 at 12 noon.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2014 will be submitted to Cabinet on 3 June for confirmation and signature.

Noted.

3. Review of Extended Corporate Management Team - Phase 2

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on options for change to the Council's Extended Corporate Management Team.

The report presented proposals for the next phase of the review of the Council's Extended Corporate Management Team (ECMT). The new structure will contain four Executive Directors working full-time within the Council. The report outlined the remit of the four Executive Director posts of Education and Youth Employment, Place, Economy and Communities and Finance and Corporate Support. In addition to the broad remits and range of services delivered through the Directorates each of the Executive Directors will also take the lead on a number of strategic priorities of the Council, whilst working with two Heads of Service managing the day-to-day operations and delivery of a range of services. The new Director of the North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership will remain as a Member of the Corporate Management Team.

The Chief Executive also provided last minute information on the matching in of staff to posts and those posts that will require to be filled.

The Cabinet agreed the proposals contained in the report.

4. Defibrillators

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the installation of defibrillators in Council Premises.

The report provided information on the number of defibrillator units currently in place or planned for North Ayrshire. The range of Automatic External Defibrillators (AED) was outlined and costings provided for the purchase of units, including accessories and maintenance costs.

Members asked questions and were provided with further information in relation to further work that will be required by the Council and partners such as the Ambulance Service and British Heart Foundation to raise awareness of the location and availability of defibrillators and promotion of the use of the units.

The Cabinet agreed that (a) the Council carries out the purchase and installation of Automatic External Defibrillators (AED) and training of Council staff as outlined in the report; (b) that the initial purchase and training costs are met from the projected in-year surplus in the General Fund budget for the year ended 31 March 2014; and (c) a full mapping exercise is undertaken within North Ayrshire to identify current and planned locations of AEDs to ascertain if the installation programme requires to be extended.

5. Asset Management Plans: 2014-2017

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance & Corporate Support) on the six themed Asset Management Plans for the period 2014-2017.

At its meeting on 29 March 2011, the former Executive approved the Corporate Asset Management Strategy. The six themed Asset Management Plans (AMPs) and associated Action Plans were approved by the former Executive on 28 February 2012. A review of the six themed plans was undertaken and Appendix 1 - 6 outlined the updated Action Plans.

Members asked questions and were provided with information in relation to:-

- the provision of a report to a future meeting on the Open Space Strategy;
- more detailed and accurate surveys that were undertaken to measure public service buildings that are suitable and accessible to disabled people and the impact of this information on the compliance level achieved for 2012/13.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) note the content of the six Asset Management Plans, and (b) approve the Action Plans for the period 2014/17.

6. Housing Services Customer Involvement & Empowerment Strategy 2014-2017

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) on the draft Customer Involvement and Empowerment Strategy and Action Plan 2014-2017.

The current strategy was developed in partnership with tenants and residents and approved in November 2010. The report outlined the wide range of work that has been undertaken with tenants and other customers to encourage and support effective tenant involvement. The new strategy for 2014/17 builds on previous strategies and on the feedback and comments received during focus groups.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the Customer Involvement and Empowerment Strategy 2014/17.

7. Impact of new Social Sector Size Criteria on Housing Services

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) on progress of actions to mitigate the impact of welfare reform on Council tenants.

The Welfare Reform Action introduced reforms that affect housing benefit for social housing tenant. The report outlined a number of key activities and services around the changes:-

- Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP), DHP position at 31 March 2014 and DHP funding 2014/15 position;
- Rent arrears due to the Social Sector Size Criteria (under occupation), numbers of tenants affected by under-occupation that are in rent arrears and overall rent arrears;
- impact of benefit cap;
- work of the Welfare Reform Team;
- temporary accommodation, reclassification of properties, tenants rehoused due to under-occupation, mutual exchanges and increasing the availability of one bedroom properties; and
- emerging issues such as an increase in void properties and difficulties in letting larger properties, demand for 1 bed accommodation, increase in homeless presentations and reasons, increasing demand for support services and Universal Credit.

Members asked questions and were provided with information in relation to:-

- the updated position in relation to supported exempt accommodation that no change is expected to the definition and local authority temporary accommodation will be subject to the under occupation charge; and
- the detailed means tested DHP application process and assistance that is provided by the Welfare Reform Team to complete the application forms.

The Cabinet agreed (a) that for a further year there should be no eviction from mainstream Council properties where rent arrears are solely due to the under-occupation penalty and where (i) it can be demonstrated that the tenant is engaging with the Council to make payment towards the arrears; or (ii) the Council continues to actively pursue other options to mitigate the impact of the under-occupation charge on individual households; (b) not to pursue tenants in Council homeless temporary accommodation for under-occupation arrears until the review of the homeless service and temporary accommodation provision is complete; (c) to note the progress on action to mitigate the impact of the under-occupation charge on tenants and on Housing Revenue Account income; (d) to note the number of tenants impacted by the under occupancy charge, and the impact on rent arrears; (e) to note the impact of the benefit cap on council tenants; (f) to note the Discretionary Housing Payment funding position for 2014/15; (g) to approve the DHP policy and Operational Procedures for 2014/15 (Appendix 1 and 2); (h) to note the emerging issues highlighted within the report; and (i) that the Chief Executive should make representation to the Scottish Government in terms of full mitigation for local authority temporary accommodation.

8. Eviction Policy for Rent Arrears

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) on a proposed amendment to the Eviction Policy to reflect the change introduced by the Scottish Secure Tenancies (Repossession Orders)(Maximum Period) Order 2012.

The report provided information in relation to legislative changes and the required amendments to the Council's Eviction Policy to reflect these changes.

The Cabinet agreed (a) to note the change introduced by the Scottish Secure Tenancies (Repossession Orders) (Maximum Period) Order 2012; and (b) that the Eviction Policy is amended to reflect there is no longer the need for tenants to sign a new tenancy agreement once a decree has been granted and that a decree will be enforceable during a period of 6 months maximum.

9. Grant Offers for Outdoor Access Projects in the Financial Year 2014/15

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) on proposed improvement projects for the outdoor path network.

The Outdoor Access Strategy and Core Paths Plan identify ways in which outdoor access can assist in addressing the key issues for North Ayrshire and the shared vision of the Single Outcome Agreement of North Ayrshire "A Better Life". Significant levels of funding are requirement to implement the Strategy and Core Paths Plan. The report provided details of applications submitted to a number of funds (Appendix 1), a summary of the offers of funding received for 2014/15 (Appendix 2) and a summary of the offers of funding received for 2015/16 (Appendix 3).

The Cabinet agreed to (a) note the grant funding submissions made; (b) approve the acceptance and expenditure of the grant offers; and (c) remit to the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) to identify potential projects and apply for funding for 2015/16 onwards.

10. Waverley Paddle Steamer – Request for Revenue Support

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) on a proposed financial contribution to Waverley Excursions Ltd.

Waverley Excursions Ltd (WEL) who operate the Waverley are seeking to build a 3 year partnership with key local authorities to secure a more stable funding structure. Requests for funds of £45,000 over a three year period have been made to North Ayrshire, South Ayrshire, Argyll & Bute and Inverclyde Councils. Glasgow City Council has been asked to contribute £50,000 per annum on account of the significant operating costs of berthing in Glasgow and the proportion of visitors who board or disembark at Glasgow.

Members asked questions and were provided with information in relation to the economic appraisal that will be undertaken in conjunction with the other local authorities.

The Cabinet agreed to the provision of funds of £45,000 to Waverley Excursions Ltd over a three year period, conditional on (a) an economic appraisal undertaken to provide a more detailed understanding of the benefits to North Ayrshire; (b) an options appraisal of the future of the Waverley; and (c) that officers explore with WEL how the economic impact of the Waverley can be maximised during the next three year period.

11. Affordable Housing Supply Programme: Kiln Court, Irvine and Montgomery Court, Kilbirnie

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on proposed design and accommodation changes to the sheltered housing developments of Kiln Court, Irvine and Montgomery Court, Kilbirnie.

The report provided details of the revised proposals that included a number of modifications to the project at Kiln Court, Irvine and alteration to the accommodation provision for Montgomery Court, Kilbirnie. The proposal relating to Kiln Court will result in an estimated cost increase of £0.570m and can be met from the Council House Build Fund.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) note the revisions to the design and accommodation layouts for the above sheltered housing developments; and (b) approve the allocation of an additional £0.570m to the Kiln Court project, from the Council House Build Fund.

12. Authority to Invite Tenders for Replacement Sheltered Housing Unit at Montgomery Court, Kilbirnie

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on proposed tender process for a replacement sheltered housing unit.

A formal tender exercise requires to be undertaken for the replacement sheltered housing unit at Montgomery Court, Kilbirnie. The contract for the works will be for a period of 60 weeks and the estimated budget for the works is £4,834,000.

The Cabinet agreed to invite tenders for the works at Montgomery Court, Kilbirnie.

13. Award of Contract - Supply of Kitchens

Submit report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on the results of the tender exercise for the supply of kitchen units and worktops.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the award of the contract to City Building (Contacts) LLP, at a contract value of £2,153,766.20.

14. Framework Agreement for Electrical Rewiring

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on the result of the tender exercise from the framework agreement for Electrical Wiring

The Cabinet agreed to approve the award of the contract to GD Chalmers Ltd, at a contract value of £735,384.

15. Energy from the Council Estate: Solar PV Contract Award

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on the result of the tender exercise for the installation of retrofit Solar PV systems on eleven North Ayrshire Council properties

The Cabinet agreed to award (a) a Design and Build Contract for the retrofit installation of Solar PV systems at eleven North Ayrshire Council properties with a value of £998,980.57 to Emtec Ltd; and (b) an associated 3 year maintenance contract of £31,335.00 for Solar PV installations at eleven North Ayrshire Council properties to Emtec Group Ltd.

16. Urgent Items

The Chair agreed to consider the following item as a matter of urgency to allow the matter to be actioned without delay.

17. Provision of a Response Monitoring System

Submitted report by the Director (North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership) on the outcome of the Options Appraisal to appoint a provider for the Response Monitoring Service.

The North Ayrshire Council Response Monitoring Service (RMS) is currently provided by SAMS - South Ayrshire Council Response Monitoring Service. The service currently provides support to approximately 3,500 service users in North Ayrshire, receiving alarm calls, recording and recalling sufficient information to enable assistance to be provided for each service user in any instance.

As a result of structure changes and internal budgets South Ayrshire Council has applied the termination clause under the terms of the Service Level Agreement and the service will cease to operate no later than 31 August 2014. In addition South Ayrshire Council has applied a 34% increase in charges with effect from 1 April 2014. Due to the restricted timescale and risk to service users it was not possible to tender this requirement, therefore a negotiated approach was taken and three options pursued. An options appraisal was undertaken (Appendix 1) and Cordia Care Services identified as the new proposed service provider. Appendix 2 provided information on the additional budget requirements for 2014/15 and 2015/16.

The Cabinet agreed to award the contract for the appointment of a provider organisation to provide the Response Monitoring Service for individuals who require the service within North Ayrshire.

The meeting ended at 3.40 p.m.