

The Executive of North Ayrshire Council
1 June 2010

IRVINE, 1 June 2010 - At a Meeting of The Executive of North Ayrshire Council at 2.30 p.m.

Present

David O'Neill, Tom Barr, John Bell, and Margaret McDougall.

Also Present

Robert Barr, Matthew Brown, Margie Currie, Andrew Chamberlain, Anthea Dickson, Alex Gallagher, William Gibson, Ruby Kirkwood, Elisabeth Marshall, and Joan Sturgeon.

In Attendance

E. Murray, Chief Executive; B. Docherty, Corporate Director, S. Gault, Head of Service (Community Care), S. Paterson, Head of Service (Children, Families and Criminal Justice) and L. Raeside, Head of Service (Finance and Performance) (Social Services and Health); I. T. Mackay, Solicitor to the Council (Corporate Services); A. Herbert, Corporate Director and A. Kirk, Manager (Design and Maintenance) (Finance and Infrastructure); C. Kirk, Corporate Director (Education and Skills); J. Montgomery, General Manager, M. McKeown, Committee Services Manager, L. McEwan, Communications Manager and K. Dyson, Communications Officer (Chief Executive's Service).

Also In Attendance

Glenys Johnston OBE, SOLACE Enterprises; and I. Colvin, Corporate Director Designate (Social Services and Health).

Chair

Councillor O'Neill in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

John Reid and Peter McNamara.

1. Independent High Level Review of Social Services

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services & Health) on the outcome of the high level independent review of Social Services, and on the response of senior management in Social Services and Health to the review recommendations.

Social Services is increasingly under pressure to meet rising levels of need and expectations in the face of reducing budgets. Against this background, Ms Glenys Johnston, through SOLACE Enterprises, was commissioned to carry out a high level review of Social Services.

Ms Johnston, who presented her final report to the Corporate Director (Social Services and Health) in May 2010, was in attendance and presented her report (a copy of which was appended to the committee report) to the Executive. The response of Social Services and Health management to the recommendations arising from the review was also appended.

During the review, the consultant spoke with a range of stakeholders and considered the funding of Social Services in comparison to other authorities. Her report found that Social Services in North Ayrshire is, despite year-on-year additional investment, under resourced for the level of deprivation which it has to address. Despite the challenges, however, the consultant concluded that performance is sound, with strong and effective senior management and committed staff. The review report also identified that there was an appetite and willingness on the part of Elected Members and officers to address the challenges facing Social Services and the Council as a whole.

The consultant's report makes a range of recommendations, some of which will generate savings, but does not identify any areas for savings that were not already under consideration by Social Services management. This underlines the challenges of addressing increasing demands in the context of diminishing resources, and of identifying funds for investment in preventative services to reduce over time the demand for and cost of acute services. In this context the consultant's report notes the need to identify key priorities for Council Services and differential savings targets for individual services.

The recommendations which will be taken forward are those which will generate savings. These include:

- A review and reduction of management costs undertaken in conjunction with the Council's 'rightsizing' exercise.
- Review of the care at home service.
- Development of telecare.
- Meals at home.
- Development of partnership working to secure efficiencies, particularly through the Integrated Resource Framework.

The process of working with the consultant has made a useful contribution to the development of a new improvement plan for Social Services and Health. It has been particularly timely in that it coincided with a pilot exercise to undertake a high level self-evaluation of the service using the Public Service Improvement Framework, the results of which will be reported to the Scrutiny Committee later in June.

Members asked questions and received clarification from the consultant and the Corporate Director (Social Services and Health) in relation to the findings of the review and the implementation of recommendations arising therefrom.

The Executive agreed to (a) note the outcome of the review; (b) approve the management response to the report; and (c) instruct the Corporate Director (Social Services and Health) to report on progress by November 2010.

2. Social Services Charging Policy

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services & Health) on proposed alterations to the Social Services charging policy.

The Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, as amended, and the Mental Health (Care & Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003, allow Councils to charge for certain social care and housing support services. Potentially charges constitute a significant support to maintaining social care services and reducing service reductions.

The Council introduced a charging policy for Social Care Services in 1998. Apart from ceasing to charge for services classified as free personal care in July 2002 and for meal preparation in November 2006, there has been no fundamental revision of charging arrangements. The report presented proposals to introduce a revised Charging Policy for Social Services. The revised Charging Policy, which was set out in Appendix 2 to the report, follows closely guidance issued by COSLA in 2010 for non residential social care services (appendix 1 to the report), and will introduce both new charges and increased charges for areas already charged for. Appendix 3 to the report set out the proposed charges for particular services.

The report highlighted key features of the proposed Charging Policy. Where the costs of levying the charge would be close to or greater than the charge to be recovered, no charge will be levied. Where a charge may be levied for an ongoing service, a financial assessment will be completed to identify what income and capital is or is not taken into account when calculating charges. This assessment will be used to establish how much a service user can afford to pay towards the costs of services they will receive. Integral to this process will be identification of unclaimed benefits. Where benefits are provided to meet the cost of care, they will only be taken into account where they are claimed, and every effort will be made to ensure that benefit claims are maximised. Each year a weekly income threshold will be set for single service users and for couples, linked to whether they are over or under age 60. Service users with income below the threshold will not be charged for services. The thresholds are based on the minimum income guaranteed by the Department of Work & Pensions. Consistent with COSLA guidance for all service users there is an additional "buffer" of 16.5% on top of the threshold to avoid hardship. The draft Charging Policy lays out in detail the means by which ability to pay is assessed.

Certain categories of people will be exempt from the Charging Policy as detailed in the report. Provision is also made within the policy to waive charges in unusual circumstances where the application of the charges would be considered to be particularly onerous. Likewise if application of charges would cause hardship in the particular circumstances of the person, charges could be waived. Charges will however only be waived in advance of a charge being levied. Charges may be written off only after the full application of the normal internal Council debt recovery procedures. Thereafter, write-off would be considered where there are social grounds and pursuance of the debt would be to the detriment of a person's well-being, or where there are financial reasons. Charges would be increased annually with inflation.

Members asked questions and received clarification in respect of the implementation of the Charging Policy. Arising from discussion, the Chair asked that the Chief Executive report to a future meeting on the development of a Charging Policy for all Council Services.

The Executive agreed (a) to approve the revised Charging Policy and level of charges as set out in the report; and (b) that the Chief Executive bring a report to a future meeting on a Charging Policy for the Council as a whole.

3. The Role of the Chief Social Work Officer and the Role of Registered Social Workers in Statutory Interventions: Guidance for Local Authorities

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services & Health) seeking approval to incorporate as Council policy, Scottish Government Guidance on the Role of the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) and on the Role of the Registered Social Worker in Statutory Interventions.

On 9 December 2008, the Executive approved a response to the Scottish Government's "Consultation on Guidance on the Role of the Chief Social Work Officer". In February 2009, the document "The Role of the Chief Social Work Officer - Principles, Requirements and Guidance" pursuant to Section 5 (1) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968", was issued to local authorities to clarify the role and function of the CSWO. In March 2010, the Scottish Government issued Guidance on The Role of the Registered Social Worker in Statutory Interventions.

The guidance makes clear the role and function of the CSWO and their duty to provide appropriate, professional advice in the discharge of local authorities' statutory social work duties. Local authorities should position the CSWO at a level of seniority commensurate with being able to advise the local authority and undertake the complex duties described in the guidance. The CSWO is a "proper officer" in relation to the social work function i.e. an officer given particular responsibility on behalf of a local authority, where the law requires the function to be discharged by a specified postholder with specified qualifications.

The guidance lists a range of responsibilities which the CSWO is responsible for carrying out. These are extensive and seek to ensure that the professional function of social work is appropriately led and managed and that effective governance arrangements are in place. One particular responsibility is to ensure that only registered social workers undertake those functions reserved in legislation or are accountable for those functions described in guidance. The guidance is clear on those functions which should only be carried out by a registered social worker. In protecting and promoting the welfare and wellbeing of children, adults at risk and communities, statutory powers may be exercised to address very serious, complex issues. This requires balancing competing needs, risks and rights. In these circumstances, given the far reaching significance of the decisions being made, it is important that accountability for the exercise of these functions should rest with a registered social worker.

Some tasks required in respect of statutory interventions may be undertaken by staff other than a registered social worker. However, in those circumstances, final decision making and recommendations for statutory intervention, drawing on information held by others and work done by them as appropriate, lies with the accountable registered social worker. The guidance lists a range of important decisions and the subsequent exercise of statutory functions for which accountability must remain with a suitably qualified and trained professional - a registered social worker. The guidance explains the reasoning behind this, emphasising both skills and training of social workers, but also the requirement that they be registered with the Scottish Social Services Council and comply with the SSSC Code of Practice for Social Service Workers.

The guidance emphasises that this provides both probity of actions and assurance to individuals and the wider public interest, that judgements about intervening in families to provide protection, depriving individuals of their liberty for periods of time, or managing offenders are being taken by people who are suitably trained, experienced and professionally qualified to make crucial decisions which will have a major impact on people's lives.

Within North Ayrshire, under current arrangements, whereby the Director of Social Services and Health is also the Council's CSWO, all the requirements of the guidance in relation to access, leadership responsibilities, accountability and reporting arrangements are met straightforwardly. However, should a change be made to this arrangement, it would be necessary to examine the guidance and put in place arrangements which ensured its requirements were met.

The Executive agreed to adopt the guidance on the role of the CSWO and the role of the Registered Social Workers in statutory interventions as set out in the report.

4. Education and Skills and Social Services and Health Pooled Budget for the Purchasing of Residential School Placements

Submitted joint report by the Corporate Directors (Social Services & Health) and (Education & Skills) on the steps taken to create a pooled budget for the purchase of residential school placements.

Research consistently shows that, in general, children do better in all areas of their lives if they are able to remain in their own families and communities. Social Services and Health and Education and Skills in North Ayrshire, along with partner agencies, are committed to helping families stay together in order to avoid children and young people being looked after away from home. Residential school placements are provided by a range of independent providers and are located throughout Britain. North Ayrshire currently has 28 young people in residential school placements, and of these placements 13 are jointly funded by Education and Skills and Social Services and Health.

Agreements between Social Services and Health and Education and Skills on the funding arrangements for residential school placements have not changed in line with current policy and practice at national or local level. This has led to out of date, historical arrangements for funding which are becoming increasingly difficult to justify and which result in "perverse incentives", for example, the choosing of more expensive jointly funded provision over provision solely funded by one service.

The Corporate Directors of Social Services & Health and Education & Skills therefore decided to establish a group to review the joint funding arrangements for residential schools. The review group concluded that it had to be acknowledged that regardless of what agency funded a residential school placement, this funding was coming from one source i.e. North Ayrshire Council. The review group recommended that this existing spend should form the basis of a single pooled budget for the purchase of residential school placements. The split of funding of future placements would be agreed based on the current percentage split of the pooled budget between Educational Services and Social Services. Criteria for the allocation of joint funding has been agreed as outlined in the appendix to the report. It is anticipated that there will be efficiency savings opportunities in terms of joint commissioning of residential provision and, by progressing the Integrated Resource Framework, the Corporate Directors (Education and Skills) and (Social Services and Health) would hope to engage health in this.

The Executive (a) agreed to approve the pooled budget and (b) acknowledged the progress made towards integrating resources to support children with complex needs in North Ayrshire.

5. Write Off of Irrecoverable and Non-recoverable Housing Benefit Overpayments

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance & Infrastructure) on balances written off under delegated powers and seeking approval to write off non-recoverable and irrecoverable Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit overpayments in excess of £1,000.

The Council's Financial Regulations provide that sums due to the Council may be written off when all avenues for recovery have been exhausted and where the sums are deemed to be irrecoverable. In terms of the Council's policy for the recovery of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Overpayments, overpayments in excess of £1,000 that cannot be recovered must be written off with Elected Member approval.

Appendix 1 to the report provided details of overpayments totalling £136,806.65 that have been written off under delegated powers. A further £113,743.53 requires the Executive's approval to be written off.

The Executive (a) noted the sums written off under delegated powers; and (b) agreed to approve the write off Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit overpayments in excess of £1,000, as set out in the appendix to the report.

6. Write Off of Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates 2008/09

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance & Infrastructure) seeking retrospective approval to write off Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates debts identified during 2008/09.

All Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates accounts go through a full recovery process. When a case meets the required criteria for write off, staff immediately update the Council Tax or Non Domestic Rates systems with a write off transaction before Elected Member approval is received. This approach is more efficient and allows staff time to complete any outstanding administrative tasks on each account.

Appendix 1 to the report provided details of the £647,771.57 of Non Domestic Rates debt written off during the financial year 2008/09. The debts cover the 2006/07 to 2008/09 financial years. Appendix 2 provided details of the £201,451.74 of Council Tax debt written off during the financial year 2008/09. The debts cover the 2003/04 to 2008/09 financial years.

Although the debts are written off, should the opportunity arise further recovery attempts will be made to recovery any sums due. The appendices provided details of the significant sums that continue to be collected after global write off i.e. £36,255 for Council Tax and £88,754 for Non Domestic Rates.

The Executive agreed to approve retrospectively the write off of Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates for 2008-09, as set out in the appendices to the report

7. Irvine: 2 Kirk Vennel

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance & Infrastructure) on the proposed revocation of a Closing Order served on a property in Irvine.

A Closing Order was served on the property at 2 Kirk Vennel, Irvine on 31 March 2009, preventing its occupation until it was brought up to standard. Following repair and improvements by the owners, the property now meets the Tolerable Standard.

The Executive agreed to authorise the revocation of the Closing Order on the property.

8. Financial Assistance to Outside Bodies

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on applications for financial assistance received from Outside Bodies.

The Executive agreed to make the following awards:-

Dalgarven Mill Trust	£3,000
Regional Screen Scotland	£2,500
Scottish Domestic Abuse Helpline	£ 500
Ethnic Minorities Law Centre	£1,000
Ayrshire Advanced Drivers	£ 300
Doors Open Day	£ 250
MS Society (North Ayrshire and Arran)	£ 500

9. Chief Social Work Officer Report

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services & Health) on the statutory governance and leadership function of the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) role as required by the Scottish Government's guidance.

Section 3 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, as amended, requires every local authority in Scotland to appoint a professionally qualified CSWO. The particular qualifications of the post are set down in Regulations and require that the post holder is a qualified social worker registered with the Scottish Social Services Council.

In February 2009, the Scottish Government published national guidance on the role of the CSWO. Within this guidance, it was recommended that each CSWO should prepare an annual report to the local authority on the statutory, governance and leadership functions of the role. The first annual report for North Ayrshire covering the period April 2008 to December 2009 was appended to the report.

Noted.

10. Golden Thread Healthcheck of Performance Management Arrangements

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the outcome and planned improvements arising from a Golden Thread Healthcheck of the Council's performance management arrangements.

At its meeting on 14 December 2009, the Scrutiny Committee noted the arrangements for a Golden Thread Healthcheck of the Council's performance management arrangements. The aim of the health check is to ensure that the Council's strategic priorities are linked to what Council staff are doing on the ground.

SOLACE Enterprises, who undertook the healthcheck have now reported. Their report, a copy of which was appended to the committee report, confirms a number of strengths in the Council's existing arrangements and highlights areas for improvement. The report set out how the Council will take forward the recommendations arising from the healthcheck. The Council's Corporate Management Team has welcomed the SOLACE report and recognised its value in providing a focus for further improvement in the Council's performance management arrangements.

The Executive agreed to (a) note (i) the conclusions and recommendations arising from the Golden Thread Healthcheck, as set out at the appendix to the report, and (ii) the actions being taken as detailed in the report to address the recommendations; and (b) refer the report to the Scrutiny Committee for its consideration.

11. The Provision of Children's Residential Services External to North Ayrshire Council

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services & Health) seeking approval to exercise a competitive tender and enter into a series of Framework Agreements with external service providers for the provision of Children's Residential School placements for children who require to be placed outwith the resources of North Ayrshire Council.

In 3 of the last 4 years, the residential school budget in Social Services and Health has been overspent, impacting on funding for other areas of service provision. Although the number of young people in residential school placements has remained fairly constant over the period, the average cost of a residential school placement has risen considerably. A range of independent providers located throughout Britain provide residential care and education placements. There is no cap on what providers can charge for their placements and year on year the increase in these placements has been well above inflation.

North Ayrshire currently has 18 young people in residential schools, 16 placed in Scotland and 2 in England. The location of most of the placements used by the Council makes it difficult for the young person to maintain contact with their parents and community, and there are also increased costs for the Council in facilitating contact and attending meetings at the school. All requests for placements in residential schools are referred to the Resource Allocation Management Group for approval. This group is made up of senior managers in Social Services and Health and Education and Skills and meets on a fortnightly basis. It is the Children's Hearing that makes a decision as to whether a young person should be admitted to a residential school. This decision is usually made on the recommendation of Social Services and Health and Education and Skills, but there are instances where the Hearing may decide to place a young person in a residential school even although this is not the recommended care plan. In these instances the Council has a statutory duty to provide this resource.

The report of the National Residential Child Care Initiative, published in December 2009, recommended that a national commissioning framework be established to commission highly specialist residential services. A national group has since been established and is currently progressing this agenda. In terms of the national context, the strategic procurement and commissioning of services has been led by Scotland Excel. At this time Scotland Excel has no contract for children's residential services and its workplan does include the commissioning of residential children's services.

Children and Families Services have identified an opportunity to achieve efficiency savings through competitive tender of placements in residential schools. Competitive tender should secure reduced placement costs and prevent future escalating of costs. It was proposed that Social Services and Health enters into framework agreements with service providers who meet the Council's requirements and who can deliver an individual residential and education placement appropriate to the needs of the young person placed there. The duration of the framework agreements would be three years, with the option to extend for a further year. It is intended to issue these contracts under the procurement process for open tendering. Framework agreements do not guarantee providers any level of business and will therefore allow North Ayrshire Council to participate in any future contractual arrangements negotiated by Scotland Excel.

The Executive agreed to approve the approach to efficiency savings and better outcomes for children as set out within the report.

12. Change Programme - Strategic Partner Consultancy

Submitted report by the Chief Executive seeking approval to tender for a strategic partner to support the Council's Change Programme.

During the 2010/11 budget setting process, Elected Members were alerted to the substantial financial pressures the Council faces over the next three years and beyond. Services are expected to do more, by providing better services, whilst budgets are being reduced. The Change Programme aims to secure £40 - £45m savings over a three year period. Achieving this will require radical changes to the way in which the Council operates. The Change Programme will be implemented in a number of phases with each phase containing a number of individual projects and initiatives.

The first phase of the Change Programme will involve an intensive period of cross-Council and Service-level activity over a 6-9 month period. This will allow savings to be achieved early on and build momentum for delivering medium and longer-term savings. Most of the projects for the first phase will be drawn from specific opportunities within the five workstreams already identified i.e. *Our Future Workforce, Our Future Working Environment, Our Future Transport Needs, Improving our Customer Service, and Procurement.*

The Change Programme is being led and co-ordinated by the Council's Business Change Team. However given the size and scope of the Programme, additional skills and resources will be required if the Council is to realise savings on the scale identified. Specialist, technical knowledge will be required for certain initiatives within the Programme, along with knowledge of different operating models and skills at making change happen. This type of specialist knowledge is not held within either the Business Change Team or the wider Council staff.

The report proposed that the Council tender for a strategic partner to assist with the Change Programme. The benefit of obtaining a strategic partner is to allow an organisation to build up knowledge of the Council and how it works, but also for the Council to be able to develop a 'trusted' relationship within a robust contractual arrangement. The strategic partner will provide additional resources as and when required to strengthen the Change Programme in a variety of areas, including but not exclusively in the areas of tax/VAT advice, organisational models, change management, project management, and benefits realisation.

To ensure that the consultant meets the Council's best value requirements, a "mini competition" will be run from the consultants who have passed the Framework's selection process. The fees charged by a strategic partner will be a combination of a daily rate together with a 'risk and reward' arrangement. This will ensure that the priorities of the strategic partner are aligned with the Council's and that Best Value is achieved throughout the process.

The Executive agreed to (a) approve the tender process to appoint a strategic partner to support the Council's Change Programme, as detailed in the report; and (b) receive a further report the outcome of the process at a future meeting.

13. Irvine: Bridgegate House, Internal Design Tender

Submitted report by the Chief Executive seeking approval to tender for the design and preparation of the Bill of Quantities for the internal space at Bridgegate House, Irvine.

In May 2009, the Council together with the Irvine Bay Urban Regeneration Company, agreed to take forward a Feasibility Study to consider the options for the refurbishment of the external elevations at Bridgegate House and the costs associated with the works. Subsequently in December 2009, the Executive agreed to proceed with the external refurbishment at a cost of £3.3m.

The internal condition of Bridgegate House has deteriorated over a number of years with maintenance expenditure being kept to a minimum. There are a number of Council Services and around 200 staff located within Bridgegate House. The facilities and internal environment at Bridgegate House no longer meet the Council's requirements.

The report set out proposals to tender for an architect to design the internal space at Bridgegate House and provide a bill of quantities from the design. It is anticipated that the internal redesign could result in up to 400 staff being based at Bridgegate. The layout will be more open plan and flexible allowing the environment to be brought up to acceptable standards and fit for purpose. A new customer service centre, focusing on providing front line service delivery, will replace the current Trading Standards Unit on the ground floor. It is intended that the redesigned Bridgegate House will play a strong part in the regeneration of Irvine Town Centre.

The Executive agreed to approve the tender process to appoint an architect and quantity surveyor to undertake the interior design work for Bridgegate House, as detailed in the report.

14. Stevenston: Auchenharvie Ice Rink

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance & Infrastructure) on tenders received for the refurbishment of Auchenharvie Ice Rink, Stevenston.

The General Services Capital Programme, as approved by the Executive and Council on 11 February 2010, makes provision for an improved ice facility at the Auchenhavrie Leisure Centre. The total allocation of the capital budget, including fees and direct purchases etc. is £3.9 m.

Works to the ice rink at the Auchenhavrie Leisure Centre comprise two contracts. The first is for the demolition of the old leisure ice pad and the stripping out of all plant, materials etc., and other down takings which are required prior to the refurbishment contract. These works are currently being carried out and are scheduled to be completed on 25 June 2010. The second contract is for the extension and refurbishment of the ice rink.

Utilising two separate contracts has allowed an earlier start to the works and will minimise the duration of the main refurbishment contract. Tenders for that part of the work were submitted on 29 April 2010 and the results of the tender process were summarised in the report. The tenders were on a price only basis. The specifications within the contract documents set the quality standards required. It is intended that works will commence on 12 July 2010.

The Executive agreed to approve the acceptance of the tender submitted by Central Building Contractors of Glasgow in the sum of £3,140,395.47 for the works to upgrade the ice rink at Auchenhavrie Leisure Centre, Stevenston.

15. Measured Term Contracts 2010/2013: Bitumen Felt Roofing & Floor Finishes

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance & Infrastructure) on tenders received for Bitumen Felt Roofing Works and for Floor Finishes.

Infrastructure and Design Services manage a range of specialist and single-trade Measured Term Contracts relevant to the Council's operational properties. These include all areas of planned and reactive works which enable properties to be well maintained and to remain operational in the event of maintenance defects arising. Two such contracts are those for Bitumen Felt Roofing and Floor Finishes.

No contract is in place for the proposed works with either Scotland Excel or the Scottish Procurement Directorate as neither body currently has that provision. Following approval to re-tender these contracts, a tendering exercise was undertaken in line with European and UK legislation and in accordance with the Council's own Corporate Procurement Policy. The results of the tendering exercise were summarised in the appendix to the report. It was proposed that the most economically advantageous offers be accepted.

The Executive agreed (a) to accept the offer from Southwest Roofing Services Ltd., for bitumen felt roofing works at an annual notional value of £150,000; (b) to accept the offer from Muirgroup Interiors Ltd., for floor finishing works at an annual notional value of £250,000; and (c) that both contracts be awarded for a three year period initially with the option to extend thereafter.

16. Framework Agreement for Painting and Decoration Works

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance & Infrastructure) seeking approval to invite tenders for the procurement of non-housing painting and decoration works.

Infrastructure and Design Services currently procure all planned and reactive maintenance work to the Council's operational property portfolio, via a series of Measured Term Contracts. The largest of these contracts is a multi-trade contract with Building Services for maintenance and minor works, through which all internal and external painting and decoration works to non-housing properties is undertaken.

The average expenditure on painting/decoration is approximately £400,000 per annum. Through a planned programme, this figure allows for cyclical re-decoration of all main properties in the portfolio, which assists in preserving the property stock, reducing further deterioration/maintenance requirements and in enhancing the operational property environment for Council Staff, property users and visitors alike.

No contract is in place for the proposed works with either Scotland Excel or the Scottish Procurement Directorate as neither body currently has that provision. As Building Services do not directly employ painters, they, in turn, have sub-contracted this work to various specialist trade contractors, taking on the management and administration roles in conjunction with Infrastructure and Design Services as per the existing contract.

The report set out proposals to procure painting and decoration works by means of a framework agreement for two years, with two individual year extensions thereafter. The intention is to appoint up to six contractors to the framework. Acceptance of the proposal will assist in ensuring that the Council is able to maintain its operational properties, create efficiencies, and secure Best Value.

The Executive agreed to approve the tendering of a framework agreement as detailed in the report.

The meeting ended at 4.35. p.m.