

Cabinet
10 December 2013

IRVINE, 10 December 2013 - At a meeting of the Cabinet of North Ayrshire Council at 2.30 p.m. in Cunninghame House, Irvine.

Present

Willie Gibson, Alan Hill, Marie Burns, John Bruce, Anthea Dickson, Tony Gurney and Ruth Maguire; Very Reverend M. Canon McManus, E. Higton and M. Fraser (Church Representatives); G. Smith (Teaching Representative); and E. Hawthorn (Youth Representative).

Also Present

Alex Gallagher.

In Attendance

E. Murray, Chief Executive; L. Friel, Corporate Director, Y. Baulk, Head of Finance, G. Macgregor, Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development, T. Reaney, Procurement Manager, A. Blakely, IT Manager (Finance and Corporate Support); I. Colvin, Director of North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership, J. McCaig, Interim Head of Community Care and A. Adrain, Interim Head of Housing (Social Services and Health); C. Kirk, Corporate Director, Mary Docherty, Head of Education (3-18), A. Sutton, Head of Community and Culture and S. Quinn, Head of Service Development (Education and Skills); C. Hatton, Corporate Director (Development and Environment); A. Fraser, Head of Democratic and Administration Services, A. Todd, Policy and Performance Officer, M. Gilmour, Senior Communications Officer (Media and Internal Communications), M. Anderson, Committee Services Officer and A. Pearson, Committee Services Support Officer (Chief Executive's Service)

Also In Attendance

K. Merrick (Acting Head Teacher), E. Duncan, R. Sillars (pupil representatives) (Broomlands Primary School); C. Sim (Head Teacher), E. Nix and L. Cummings (pupil representatives) (Fencedyke Primary School); and E. Cumming (Head Teacher), K. McAdam and N. Riddell (pupil representatives) (Towerlands Primary School).

Chair

Councillor Gibson in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

J. McCormick (Youth Representative).

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

The accuracy of the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 26 November 2013, was confirmed and the Minutes signed in accordance with paragraph 7(1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

3. Naming of the New Primary School Development in Irvine

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) which invited the Cabinet to select a name for the new primary school development in Irvine, from a short-list provided by a working group comprising representatives of the existing three school communities.

Pupil representatives from Broomlands, Fencedyke and Towerlands Primary Schools gave a presentation on the justifications for the short-listed names of Cherrylands Primary School, Cunninghame Primary School and Elderbank Primary School.

Following a ballot, the Cabinet agreed, by a majority decision, to name the new primary school development in Irvine "Elderbank Primary School".

4. Stanley Primary School Accommodation Pressures

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) which (a) advised of accommodation pressures at Stanley Primary School, Ardrossan; and (b) presented options for addressing the issue.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the following:-

- the process for, and difficulties associated with, attempting to predict school capacity requirements;
- issues relating to the PPP model;
- the importance of general purpose and library areas within schools; and
- the disruption likely to arise from a change to the school catchment.

The Cabinet agreed (a) to note the content of the report; (b) to approve procurement of modular accommodation for August 2014 at an estimated cost of £110,000 in year 1 (installation and maintenance), with £23,500 revenue implications per annum thereafter; and (c) that Officers undertake further work around options for a permanent solution for the future taking account of the wider school estate.

5. Corrie Primary School Annexe - Structural Issues

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) which (a) advised on structural issues at the Corrie Primary School Annexe, which accommodates dining/PE/Early Years; and (b) provided information on the various options for addressing the issue, together with associated costs.

The Cabinet agreed to approve funding of £175,000 from the approved Capital Plan, for the reconfiguration of Corrie school house to create a fit for purpose learning and teaching environment for the school.

6. Toilet Provision in North Ayrshire Council Schools

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) which (a) advised on the views held by young people within schools on the current condition and suitability of school toilets; and (b) made recommendations for future investment.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the following:-

- whether individual schools had their own policies on access to school toilets;
- the importance of learning from best practice elsewhere;
- the timescale for future meetings of the reference group;
- the value of members of the Cabinet and, in particular, lay members, having the opportunity to undertake visits to familiarise themselves with the school estate; and
- whether issues associated with school toilets relate mainly to the secondary school sector, rather than primary schools.

The Cabinet agreed (a) to note the content of the report; (b) to approve the proposed way forward as set out at Section 3 of the report, in terms of continuing to place a high priority on upgrading toilet facilities, prioritising the schools identified, involving pupils in the design process for new schools and learning from good practice throughout the country; (c) that the Head of Service Development (Education and Skills) make arrangements for members of the Cabinet, including lay representatives, to (i) visit the school estate and (ii) receive a copy of any school policies covering the use of school toilets; and (d) that the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) submit a further report to the Cabinet (Education) on any issues arising as a result of the Cabinet's visits to schools.

7. 600 Hours Update

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) on the progress made towards delivering 600 hours of early learning and childcare by August 2014.

The Cabinet agreed that the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) (a) continue to develop the plans to ensure 600 hours provision is in place for August 2014; and (b) provide an update to the Cabinet in February 2014.

8. Strategic Review of Educational Services

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on proposals to take forward the Strategic Review of Education Services.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the following:-

- best practice in terms of public engagement in consultation exercises;
- the importance of focussing on achievement and innovation in schools, rather than simply on school buildings themselves;
- educational approaches across Scotland and internationally;
- the opportunity, following the outcome of the recent Three Towns Campus proposals, to undertake further consultation on educational provision; and
- the value of the approach being proposed.

The Cabinet agreed (a) to note the work proposed to take forward the Strategic Review of Educational Services during 2014, in terms of the six workstreams detailed at Section 2.6 of the report; and (b) that, while the review takes place, any new investment in the Council's property assets will be limited to essential maintenance.

9. Council Plan, Performance Management Strategy and Single Outcome Agreement (SOA):Q2 Progress Update

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on progress in implementing Action Plans in respect of the Council Plan, the Performance Management Strategy and the Single Outcome Agreement.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the following:-

- the likely timescale for the introduction of the National Assessment Toolkit;
- the appropriateness of the indicator relating to the number of active volunteers who have participated in training delivered by Community and Culture;
- work being undertaken by Community and Culture to focus support on volunteer groups, rather than individual volunteers;
- the strategy to address the projected decline in the population of North Ayrshire;
- the need for further background information on actions which are adrift of target; and
- recruitment difficulties associated with the new Vulnerable Children (0-5) Support Service.

The Cabinet agreed (a) to note that progress continues in implementing the three Action Plans for the Council Plan, Performance Management Strategy and Single Outcome Agreement (SOA); (b) that future reports should include further background information on any actions which are adrift of target; and (c) to refer the report to the Scrutiny and Petitions Committee for its consideration.

10. 2012/13 Statutory Performance Indicators - Scottish Rankings

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the performance of the Council in comparison with other Councils, in terms of Audit Scotland's published Statutory Performance Indicators.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the Council Tax collection rates, compared with that of other Scottish Councils, and measures to improve performance.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) note the Council's position in relation to other Councils; (b) note progress being made in terms of the Council's overall performance; and (c) refer the report to the Scrutiny and Petitions Committee for its consideration.

11. Service Plan 2013/14 Progress Reports as at 30 September 2013

Submitted report by the Chief Executive which provided an update on the performance of all Council Services as at 30 September 2013.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the following:-

Finance and Corporate Support

- plans to brief Members on the outcome-based budgeting pilot;

Education and Skills

- the level of detail available on post-school destinations and the extent to which ongoing tracking takes place;

Development and Environment

- the positive work being done by the Service, particularly the new Team North Ayrshire approach;
- the potential for North Ayrshire to increase its population via immigration from the EU and beyond, including Afghan relocation;

Social Services and Health

- the pressure being experienced by frontline staff as a result of workload issues associated with Welfare Reform, and measures to support staff.

Members of the Cabinet expressed their appreciation of the work being done by staff across the Council, particularly those continuing to produce award-winning work notwithstanding the additional pressures and workload associated with Welfare Reform.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) note the performance of all Services as at 30 September 2013 against the actions, key performance indicators and risks in the 2013/14 Service Plans; (b) the removal of Social Services and Health (Social Services) indicator SPSS_P_E02 (Percentage of learning disability service users receiving respite accessing short breaks); (c) the amendment of Social Services & Health (Social Services) indicator SPSS_P_F01 - Debt Advice indicator (£), which will be converted to data only but will remain in the Service Plan; and (d) refer the Service Plan 2012/13 Progress Reports for the consideration of the Scrutiny and Petitions Committee on 12 December 2012.

12. Provost's Hospitality Budget and Fundraising Activity

Submitted report by the Chief Executive which (a) advised on the Provost's committed hospitality expenditure for 13/14; and (b) gave details of the Provost's fundraising activity from June 2013.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) note the contents of the report; (b) approve the requests for funding to date, as set out in the report; and (c) receive an update in six months.

13. Commission on Strengthening of Local Democracy: Call for Evidence

Submitted report by the Chief Executive which (a) provided information on COSLA's Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy; and (b) sought agreement on a proposed response to the Commission's Call for Evidence.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the response to the Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy's Call for Evidence, as set out at Appendix 2 to the report.

14. Learning Disabilities Strategy Review

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services and Health) on (a) the outcome of the strategic review of North Ayrshire Council Learning Disabilities Services; and (b) sought approval to implement the proposals arising from it.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the following:-

- the positive work being done in terms of the Employability Skills Hub; and
- the importance of marketing the products on offer from Hazeldene social enterprise.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) note the outcome of the strategic review of North Ayrshire Council Learning Disabilities Services; and (b) approve the implementation of the service model set out at Section 3 of the report, in terms of the Learning Disabilities Team, Day Services, Commissioned Day Services, Supported Accommodation, Complex Needs, Telecare, and Carers.

15. Protection from Eviction (Bedroom Tax) (Scotland) Bill - Consultation Paper

This item is subject to the call-in procedure per the Council's Scheme of Administration and will be considered at a meeting of the Scrutiny and Petitions Committee.

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services and Health) which (a) advised on the Protection from Eviction (Bedroom Tax) (Scotland) Private Members Bill (Consultation Paper); and (b) proposed a response to the consultation.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the following:-

- the importance of reiterating this Administration's complete opposition to the Bedroom Tax;
- the potential of the proposed Bill to create further issues; and
- any impact on the Council's share of funds for Discretionary Housing Payments arising from a recent vote at a meeting of the Scottish Parliament's Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) note the content of the consultation paper on the Protection from Eviction (Bedroom Tax) (Scotland) Private Members Bill; and (b) approve the content of the proposed consultation response, as set out at Appendix 2 to the report.

16. Recovery, Reuse and Recycling of Bulky Household Waste

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) which (a) advised of the results of the tender exercise for the Recovery, Reuse and Recycling of Bulky Household Waste; and (b) presented a recommendation in respect of the award of the contract.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the award of the contract for the provision of a service for the Recovery, Reuse and Recycling of Bulky Household Waste to Lowmac Alloys Limited.

17. Ayrshire Civil Contingencies Team - Accommodation Move

Submitted report by the Chief Executive which provided information on changes in accommodation for the Ayrshire Civil Contingencies Team, which will relocate to the John Pollock Centre in Mainholm, Ayr on 4 January 2014.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the potential for rent or rates to be charged in the future.

Noted.

18. ICT Strategy Update

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) which provided an update on progress and details of the next steps in relation to the ICT Strategy.

Noted.

19. Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2013/14

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) which provided a Treasury Management update for the period 1 April to 31 October 2013.

Noted.

20. Maximising Attendance Performance - September 2013 (Quarter 2 Summary)

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) which gave an analysis of sickness absence in Quarter 2 and the current year to date position.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on any preventative measures in place in respect of work-related stress.

Noted.

21. Employee Engagement Survey

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) which provided a six-monthly update on progress on Employee Engagement Survey improvement plans.

Noted.

22. Arran Outdoor Education Centre

Submit report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) which offered an interim progress report on the options appraisal to determine options for the future of Arran Outdoor Education Centre.

The Cabinet agreed (a) that officers (i) continue to identify and develop opportunities for the future sustainability of Arran Outdoor Education Centre and (ii) conclude the review of the operation of the centre, while maintaining a high quality service for young people in North Ayrshire; and (b) that, once the Roseangle report is complete, a further report is submitted to the Cabinet in early Spring 2014 on the options appraisal to determine options for the future of Arran Outdoor Education Centre.

23. South West Hub Territory Partnering Board: Minutes of 10 October 2013

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on the Minutes of the meeting of the South West Hub Territory Partnering Board: Minutes of 10 October 2013.

Noted.

24. Exclusion of the Public and Press

The Cabinet resolved, in terms of Section 50(A)4 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, to exclude from the meeting, the press and the public for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

25. Garnock Campus Project - Acquisition of Land at Longbar

This item was subject to the call-in procedure per the Council's Scheme of Administration. The Council, at its meeting on 18 December 2013, agreed to uphold the Cabinet's decision.

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) which (a) advised on progress made in development the design proposals and acquiring the land required at Longbar (known as Site 7) to support the development of the new Garnock Campus; and (b) sought approval to conclude the purchase of land from the current landowners.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) note the progress to date in developing the new Garnock Campus design proposals; and (b) approve the purchase of the four areas of land at Longbar (known as Site 7), on the terms outlined in the report.

The meeting ended at 5.00 p.m.