

Corporate Strategy Committee  
27 May 1997

**Irvine, 27 May 1997** - At a Meeting of the Corporate Strategy Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

**Present**

James Clements, Jack Carson, Ian Clarkson, Stewart Dewar, John Donn, David Gallagher, Samuel Gooding, Jane Gorman, James Jennings, Joseph McKinney, Thomas Morris, David O'Neill, John Sillars, George Steven and Samuel Taylor.

**In Attendance**

The Chief Executive; The Director of Community and Recreational Services; The Head of Corporate Business; D Addison, Head of Revenue Service (Financial Services); A Osborne, Corporate Policy Officer; G Bruce, Assistant Marketing Officer and J Bannatyne, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

**Chair**

Mr Clements in the Chair.

**Apologies for Absence**

Patrick Browne and Robert Rae.

**1. Minutes Confirmed**

The Minutes of the Meetings of the Committee held on 8 April, 15 April and 7 May 1997, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

**2. North Ayrshire Law Centre: Urban Programme Funded Project**

(Previous Minute Reference: Corporate Strategy Committee 15 April 1997.)

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the progress of the North Ayrshire Law Centre to date.

The Management Committee of the Law Centre has formally intimated its acceptance of all the conditions set by the Corporate Strategy Committee on 15 April 1997 and the recommendations in respect of the voluntary sector have now been implemented. In addition the agreed arrangements for the new joint supervision by the Social Work Directorate and the Directorate of the Chief Executive and Corporate Support Services have been jointly discussed and will be implemented.

The Law Centre opened to the public on 14 April 1997 to deal with unmet legal needs in the Urban Programme eligible areas of North Ayrshire. A wide range of options for assessing advice is available including appointments, drop-in surgeries and appointment based evening consultations. The Law Centre is currently assessing public demand in terms of the most accessible opening hours and subject matters to be covered and in the first three weeks of operation has dealt with twenty-five cases either directly or by appropriate referral. Arrangements are being made for a number of talks to relevant voluntary and community groups and for visits to the Law Centre by these groups. Posters advertising the services provided by the Law Centre have been widely distributed and the Council's Marketing and Publicity Section will continue to promote this service.

Noted.

### **3. Equal Opportunities**

#### **(a) Policy Statement and Draft Service Provision Policy**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a proposed Equal Opportunities Policy Statement and on the outcome of the consultation exercise on the Draft Equal Opportunities and Service Provision Policy.

On 4 March 1997 the Equal Opportunities Member/Officer Working Group agreed to recommend that the following Policy Statement be approved by the Committee:-

“North Ayrshire Council is committed to upholding the principle of equal opportunities for all the people of North Ayrshire both its customers and employees. The Council will endeavour to ensure that there is no discrimination against any resident or employee on the grounds of colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, gender, marital status, age, sexuality, disability, employment status, responsibility for dependants, religion, political beliefs, trade union activity or any other unjustifiable practices.

In promoting fairness and justice in the delivery of the Council's services, the Council will consult with each of its communities to ensure that its services meet local needs and will seek to improve on the delivery of those services.”

The Working Group also approved a Draft Policy on Equal Opportunities and Service Provision as a basis for consultation. This consultation exercise is now complete and the responses received to the consultation were generally positive and favourable. The Working Group considered the responses and the amended Draft Policy submitted as an appendix to the report.

Subject to approval of the Draft Policy a simplified version will be produced for the public and employees. In addition an Officers Group will be established to implement the Policy and to develop the various Action Plans involved which will require to be realistic and have specific timescales and targets.

The Committee agreed (i) to approve (A) the Policy Statement on Equal Opportunities; and (B) the Equal Opportunities and Service Provision Policy; (ii) to remit to the Officers Working Group to develop Action Plans for each section of the Policy; and (iii) that the comments made during the consultation exercise be taken into account in the preparation of the Action Plans.

#### **(b) Equal Opportunities: Committee Structure**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a proposed structure for reporting on Equal Opportunities matters to the Council.

On 9 April 1996 the Committee agreed to establish a Member/Officer Working Group on Equal Opportunities to report on proposals for the handling of Equal Opportunities issues by the Council. It was subsequently remitted to the Group to progress the Draft Equal Opportunities in Employment Policy, the proposed implementation plan for that Policy and an equality audit of Council services. This Working Group has now fulfilled its remit. The Working Group considered means of reporting on Equal Opportunities matters to the Council and were of the view that the continued use of a Member/Officer Working Group would allow such matters to be considered on a regular basis, with reports being submitted to the Corporate Strategy Committee. This would also allow close member involvement in promoting and developing work on Equal Opportunities issues generally and would also ensure that the views of members are fully taken into account when addressing equality issues.

The Committee agreed (i) to appoint a new Member/Officer Working Group to consider Equal Opportunities matters on a quarterly basis and to report to the Corporate Strategy Committee; (ii) that the Group will comprise the Chair, Vice-Chair, David Gallagher, Jane Gorman,

Margaret Highet, Margaret Munn, Alan Munro, Peter McNamara, Gena Seales and Samuel Taylor; and (iii) that the role of the Working Group be to (A) consider the development of Equal Opportunities initiatives to be promoted by the Council; (B) oversee the development of the Action Plans arising from the Equal Opportunities and Service Provision Policy; (C) examine monitoring information produced by Personnel Services in relation to Equal Opportunities and Employment; and (D) advise the Corporate Strategy Committee on Equal Opportunities matters generally.

#### **(c) Access Panels**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the proposed establishment of an Access Panel for North Ayrshire.

On 15 May 1997, the Equal Opportunities Member/Officer Working Group considered the possible establishment of an Access Panel in North Ayrshire. The two main objectives of a panel are (i) to lobby for better access; and (ii) to provide advice when new developments and refurbishments are planned. The North Ayrshire Forum on Disability and Disability Scotland have advised of their support for the proposal to establish an Access Panel in North Ayrshire.

The Committee agreed that a Public Meeting be convened to ascertain local interest in the establishment of an Access Panel for North Ayrshire.

#### **4. Community Safety Task Group**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on proposals to set up a North Ayrshire Community Safety Task Group.

Community Safety encourages local people to work together with the Local Authority, Police, Fire Brigade and Health Authorities to promote local solutions to local safety problems in their own communities. The five Area Committees of the Council previously agreed to set up a Community Safety Working Group whose recommendations were approved by the Corporate Strategy Committee on 27 November 1996.

Provision has been made in the current year's Corporate Strategy Budget to continue support for Community Safety initiatives including the Zero Tolerance Campaign, the Community Safety Challenge Budget, Clued Up Kids and the Community Safety Task Group. The Community Safety Centre, by invitation, submitted proposals for the setting up of a Task Group which it would be asked to administer and co-ordinate. The Task Group could also endorse the creation of a North Ayrshire Community Safety Forum to provide voluntary organisations and representatives from communities throughout North Ayrshire with the opportunity to meet, discuss and act upon their Community Safety concerns. Details were provided on various types of organisation which might be included.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the proposals for the setting up of a Community Safety Task Group in the terms indicated in the report; and (b) that the Chief Executive implement these.

#### **5. Arran Sports Association**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a remit from the Community and Recreational Services Committee on 29 April 1997 to consider the provision of additional grant assistance towards the construction of a sports facility at Ormisdale Park, Brodick, Isle of Arran.

Most of the ground works in relation to the construction of the sports facility have now been completed and construction of the pavilion will commence in late 1997. Initial grants towards the project totalling £811,000 were awarded from a number of agencies including the European Regional Development Fund, the former Cunninghame District Council and North Ayrshire Council. Arran Sports Association have identified a shortfall of £76,000 and have now requested an additional £15,000 from the Council. The Director of Community and Recreational Services advised that there was some indication that the other funding agencies may jointly

contribute an additional £20,000 towards the shortfall.

After a full discussion, the Committee agreed to contribute a further £15,000 from the Capital Budget towards the above project.

## **6. Local Agenda 21: Environmental Policy: Draft Consultation Document**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the progress of the consultation process in relation to the Local Agenda 21 Draft Environmental Policy document.

It was envisaged initially that a deadline of 12 May 1997 would allow the Local Agenda 21 Policy Group to assimilate all the responses received on the document and report to this meeting with a recommended Environmental Policy. Although a number of replies were received within the deadline, several factors have emerged which have made it necessary to extend the deadline for responses to 16 June 1997. It is therefore proposed to report on the Environmental Policy at the next meeting.

The Committee agreed that a further report be submitted to the next meeting confirming the outcome of the extended consultation period and presenting an Environmental Policy for North Ayrshire Council which takes account of the responses received.

## **7. Review of Information and Advice Services**

(Previous Minute Reference: Corporate Strategy Committee 4 March 1997.)

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on the progress of the review of Information and Advice Services covering welfare rights, money advice and client representation.

On 4 March 1997 the Committee approved detailed proposals for the review of service provision in the areas of welfare rights, money advice and client representation to enable recommendations to be made for a corporate approach to the provision of such services to ensure that the Council is receiving value for money. A review team comprising officers from the Chief Executive's Directorate was set up and it was agreed that a report on the review be submitted to this meeting. It was further agreed that the existing funding of external agencies would be pro-rata for a maximum period of six months, pending the final recommendations of the review.

The review has proved complex and it has not been possible to report fully to this meeting. The report therefore covered progress to date and a full and final report will be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee on 29 July.

A Scottish Consumer Council report "Following Our Advice: A Review of Advice Services in Scotland" has been helpful in providing an insight to the key issues requiring to be addressed. Consultations have been carried out with appropriate personnel and agencies and the experiences of both Dumfries and Galloway and Fife Councils in this area have been valuable.

The review work so far has indicated a single funded voluntary agency may be the best way forward as this would eliminate existing duplication, would preserve the current independence of information and advice provision, and would enable the Council to negotiate a single service level agreement. This proposal would however require to be assessed fully by a Member/Officer Working Group.

To assist with the ongoing review it is proposed that independent market research be carried out which would complement the findings of the review team.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve in principle the development of a single funded voluntary agency; (b) to approve the proposal for further market research to preserve the fairness and transparency of the review process; (c) that a comprehensive final report be submitted to the Committee on 29 July; and (d) to note the progress meantime.

## **8. James Watt College: North Ayrshire**

(Previous Minute Reference: Special Corporate Strategy Committee 7 May 1997.)

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on (a) progress by James Watt College in pursuing PFI and ERDF funding for the establishment of North Ayrshire College and the associated Community Learning Centre in the Three Towns; and (b) the proposed appointment of a representative to the Board of Management of James Watt College of Further and Higher Education.

James Watt College are proceeding with the PFI programme and have indicated that they hope to be in a position to have identified a short list of organisations to receive tender documentation by mid-June. Representatives from the College, accompanied by officials of the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department, met with Enterprise Ayrshire on 8 May 1997 and it is understood that a paper will be presented to the Enterprise Ayrshire Board supporting James Watt College as the sole provider, offering support for their ERDF bid and recommending that gap funding be met with financial support up to a maximum of £500,000. The College have also confirmed that they are proceeding on the basis of one large Community Learning Centre while also maintaining a partnership arrangement with ASSIST. In their search for a suitable location they have been assisted by the Director of Planning, Roads and Environment and are also in communication with the Director of Education regarding the potential of surplus school accommodation. It is the wish of the College that ERDF applications for both the main site in Kilwinning and the Community Learning Centre should be submitted by the European deadline of 11 June 1997.

With the advent of proposals for a North Ayrshire Campus the College are of the view that the Council should be represented on their Board of Management preferably by a female member. A formal request for a nomination to the Board has now been received.

After discussion, the Committee agreed (i) to approve the nomination of Councillor Irene Oldfather as the Council's representative on the Board of Management of James Watt College of Further and Higher Education; and (ii) otherwise to note the position meantime.

## **9. Irvine: Office Accommodation: Bridgegate House**

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on (a) the proposed allocation of office accommodation at Bridgegate House for use during the implementation of replacement computer systems for Housing and Financial Services and for recovery initiatives; and (b) a proposal to establish a First Stop Shop at Bridgegate, Irvine.

The Committee on 15 April 1997 approved the acceptance of a tender from CFM for the supply, commissioning and implementation of hardware and software to provide unified benefit, Housing rents and Council Tax systems. During the implementation period accommodation will be required for consultants provided by the software suppliers, staff from Housing Services, Financial Services and Information Technology Services who will be involved in the project on a full and part-time basis and for training facilities. Additionally, CFM have advised that for the duration of the project up to five of their staff could be working in North Ayrshire at any one time. The introduction of such a major system will require intensive training for all Council staff directly involved and details of the training requirements, including an appropriate programme, are currently being discussed with CFM.

Suitable accommodation for these activities has been identified within offices at Bridgegate, Floor 3 West, formerly occupied by Irvine Development Corporation. A Local Area Network will require to be installed within these offices and additional power supplies will be required to provide access to the new computer system. On completion of the project these offices will become available for an alternative use.

It is still the Government's intention to distribute £3m of additional resources to local authorities to finance recovery initiatives for outstanding Community Charges and Council Tax and



detailed proposals on this will be submitted in due course to the appropriate Committee. It is proposed that part of the accommodation at Bridgegate be used for this purpose.

The properties formerly occupied by the Chinese Restaurant and Natural Choice at Bridgegate which have been vacated have been identified as a site for a First Stop Shop. Steps have been taken to recover possession of these properties and when this has been achieved the Council will be in a position to proceed with the development.

The Committee agreed (i) to approve the allocation of accommodation identified in the report; (ii) to authorise the installation of the necessary communications and computer equipment; and (iii) to note the progress in relation to establishing a First Stop Shop at Bridgegate House.

#### **10. Disaggregation of Former Regional Council Property: Sale of Strathclyde House 4 (1/3 India Street, Glasgow)**

(Previous Minute Reference: Corporate Strategy Committee 21 May 1996.)

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the terms of offer for the sale of Strathclyde House 4 to Derby Investments Holdings Limited.

The Corporate Strategy Committee on 21 May 1996 approved an agreement which involved all the new unitary authorities within the Strathclyde Regional area together with the Joint Police and Fire Boards and the West of Scotland Water Authority setting out the terms of settlement for the former Headquarters properties. The agreement provided that each of the authorities would relinquish its claim on the Headquarters buildings and any financial interest that may result therefrom, in exchange for a share of the proceeds of Strathclyde House 4, which property was considered to be surplus to the requirement of the authorities and best suited for disposal. The agreement set out a formula for disbursement of the proceeds of the sale of this property whereby the Council, along with all other authorities with the exception of Glasgow City Council, would share in the first £1m of any free proceeds. The Council's proportion was calculated as 6.131%. The agreement also provided that the second £m of any proceeds would be received solely by Glasgow City Council and any additional excess would be divided proportionately amongst all the authorities including Glasgow. North Ayrshire Council's proportion in the second calculation was 3.061%.

Glasgow City Council has now received an offer of £2.7 from Derby Investments Holdings Limited for the sale of Strathclyde House 4. The Monitoring Group established to vet the offers received has recommended acceptance of the offer. In the event that this offer is accepted, the Council would receive a Capital Receipt in the region of £82,000 with a small proportion being deducted to meet the expenses incurred by City of Glasgow Council in the marketing and conveyancing exercises.

The Committee agreed to the sale of Strathclyde House 4 to Derby Investments Holdings Limited on the proposed terms.

#### **11. Enterprise Zone Special Status Designation**

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on a proposal that the Council pursue Enterprise Zone status for North Ayrshire.

At the Regeneration Conference in Ardrossan on 21 February 1997, the Council intimated its intention to pursue special status designation for North Ayrshire. The most appropriate route for special status is considered to be through the existing Enterprise Zone arrangements. Unemployment statistics showing comparisons between North Ayrshire and those Councils with Enterprise Zones within their areas in close proximity to North Ayrshire (i.e. North Lanarkshire and Inverclyde) indicate that North Ayrshire has a reasonable claim for Enterprise Zone status. Details were also provided on the existing Enterprise Zone sites in North and South Lanarkshire and on the benefits for companies locating in these zones including the Infrastructural

improvements which are made in the areas surrounding the Enterprise Zones.

North Ayrshire is currently considered only as part of an all Ayrshire approach by Enterprise Ayrshire and whilst some of the special circumstances of North Ayrshire are recognised, particularly in the Three Towns area, there is no overall strategy for North Ayrshire in general terms. Consequently an Enterprise Ayrshire Strategy, focusing on the needs of North Ayrshire as a whole requires to be considered, with particular emphasis on road links. The upgrading of the A737 is crucial to assist with the development of North Ayrshire. Regeneration involving housing will require the Council to contact all housing providers to establish their needs and to ascertain whether the Council can develop alternative forms of partnerships.

The Committee agreed (a) to establish an Officer Working Group led by the Chief Executive to continue to develop the claim for special status for North Ayrshire; (b) to invite Enterprise Ayrshire to draft a North Ayrshire Development Plan within the overall Enterprise Ayrshire development arrangements; (c) to lobby the Scottish Office for special status designation for North Ayrshire; (d) to continue lobbying for improvements to the A737 as a significant factor in the regeneration of North Ayrshire, whilst contributing to the campaign for the M77 and A70; and (e) to convene a meeting with the major housebuilders to ascertain their views on the contribution they can make to the regeneration of North Ayrshire.

## **12. Strathclyde Police Liaison Officer**

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on the proposed secondment of a Police Officer to work with the Council in developing Community Safety Strategies.

The Council has already developed substantial positive links with Strathclyde Police at both operational and personal levels, particularly during the Operation Spotlight Campaign. Strathclyde Police have now formally requested that consideration be given to the secondment of a Police Officer to work with the Council in developing Community Safety Strategies. The Officer would spend the equivalent of two days per week within North Ayrshire, two days per week within East Ayrshire and the remaining day with Strathclyde Police. The main purpose of the creation of this post would be to assist in the development of policies on Community Safety and other issues and would provide an opportunity to develop better working relationships on a strategic level between Strathclyde Police and the Council.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposal for the secondment of a middle-ranking Police Officer to work with North Ayrshire Council in developing Community Safety Strategies.

## **13. Environment Week 1997**

(Previous Minute Reference: Corporate Strategy Committee 4 March 1997.)

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the outcome of the various activities within the programme for Environment Week 1997.

In addition to the normal programme of activities, arrangements were made for a Police Officer to accompany the Council's Dog Warden on visits to each of the five pilot project areas identified to reduce dog fouling in order to distribute leaflets, posters, dog tidy bags, to provide advice in relation to the use of dog bins and to give warnings where offences were being committed. As a follow up, Strathclyde Police have written to the Council requesting that this initiative be extended.

The Committee agreed (a) to participate in Environment Week 1998; (b) to authorise the Director of Planning, Roads and Environment (i) to liaise with Strathclyde Police on the extension of their joint initiative with the Council's Dog Warden to combat dog fouling; and (ii) to formulate and implement appropriate proposals for this in future; and (c) to note the successful outcome of Environment Week 1997.

#### **14. Nomination of Council Representatives to Serve on Outside Agencies**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the nomination of members to serve on outside agencies.

The Committee agreed to nominate the following representative to serve on the undernoted outside agency:-

<b>Outside Agencies</b>	<b>Representative</b>
West of Scotland Defence and Aerospace Network	Samuel Gooding

#### **15. Conferences, Seminars Etc.: Invitations**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on invitations to attend the undernoted Conferences:-

(a) The Scottish Local Government Information Unit Conference entitled "Local Business Rates: A Solution or a Problem?" to be held in the Carlton Highland Hotel, Edinburgh on 19 June 1997;

(b) The Scottish Local Government Information Unit Conference entitled "Public Consultation and Community Involvement" to be held in Edinburgh on Friday 20 June 1997; and

(c) The UK Nuclear Free Local Authorities Annual General Meeting and Conference 1997 to be held in the Townhouse, Kirkcaldy, Fife, between 22 and 24 October 1997.

The Committee agreed that one member and one officer be authorised to attend (a) above and that there be no attendance at (b) or (c).

#### **16. Area Committees**

##### **(a) North Coast and Arran Area Committee**

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS1) of the North Coast and Arran Area Committee, being the Minutes of its Meeting held on 12 May 1997.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

##### **(b) Garnock Valley Area Committee**

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS2) of the Garnock Valley Area Committee, being the Minutes of its Meeting held on 13 May 1997.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

##### **(c) Kilwinning, Dreghorn and Springside Area Committee**

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS3) of the Kilwinning, Dreghorn and Springside Area Committee, being the Minutes of its Meeting held on 14 May 1997.

Arising from the Minutes, the Committee considered the following item:-

##### **(i) Agenda Item 7: Community Safety: Crime Statistics**



The Committee expressed concern over the availability, consumption and abuse of alco-pops among young people and its contribution towards anti-social behaviour which had been raised at the Area Committee Meeting.

After discussion the Committee agreed (A) that the Council participate in the Campaign against the sale of alco-pops; (B) to advise the Scottish Office, the drinks manufacturers and COSLA of the Council's concern; (C) to remit to the Protective Services Committee to take up this issue; and (D) that the local press be requested to give appropriate publicity to this issue.

The Committee further agreed otherwise to note the report.

**(d) Irvine Area Committee**

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS4) of the Irvine Area Committee, being the Minutes of its Meeting held on 14 May 1997.

The Committee further agreed to note the report.

**(e) Three Towns Area Committee**

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS5) of the Three Towns Area Committee, being the Minutes of its Meeting held on 15 May 1997.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

**17. Requests for Financial Assistance**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on requests received for financial assistance:-

**(i) Pride Scotland**

The Committee agreed to refuse the application;

**(ii) The Scottish National Federation for the Welfare of the Blind**

The Committee agreed to award The Scottish National Federation for the Welfare of the Blind £124;

**(iii) Disability Scotland**

The Committee agreed to award Disability Scotland £250;

**(iv) Scottish Constitutional Convention**

The Committee agreed to award the Scottish Constitutional Convention £500;

**(v) Jobs Action Group (Irvine Unemployed Advice and Resource Centre)**

The Committee agreed to refuse the application;

**(vi) Ayrshire and Arran Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group**

The Committee agreed to award the Ayrshire and Arran Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group £900;

**(vii) James McFarlane Respite Playscheme**

The Committee agreed to award the James McFarlane Respite Playscheme £3,500; and

**(viii)        Dirrans Amateur Football Club**

The Committee agreed to award Dirrans Amateur Football Club £150.

The meeting ended at 2.30 p.m.