

Scrutiny and Petitions Committee
7 June 2016

IRVINE, 7 June 2016 - At a Special Meeting of the Scrutiny and Petitions Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 1.00 p.m.

Present

John Hunter, Robert Barr, Matthew Brown, Alex Gallagher, Catherine McMillan and Alan Munro

Also Present

Ian Clarkson, Joe Cullinane and Donald Reid (as signatories to the Call In request), Marie Burns (on behalf of Alan Hill as relevant Cabinet Member) and Tom Marshall (as a local Elected Member).

In Attendance

E. Murray, Chief Executive; Mark Inglis, Senior Manager (Intervention Services) (Health & Social Care Partnership); A. Laurensen, Team Manager (Regeneration) and J. Cumming, Project Officer (Economy and Communities); and A. Fraser, Head of Democratic Services and M. Anderson, Committee Services Team Leader (Chief Executive's Service).

Chair

Councillor Hunter in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Grace McLean.

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest by Members in terms of Standing Order 10 and Section 5 of the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

2. Call In: Gallowgate Square, Largs

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a Call In Request received in respect of the decision taken by the Cabinet at its meeting on 24 May 2016 to proceed to take forward the Gallowgate Square development in line with the decision of Cabinet on 15 September 2015. A copy of the Cabinet report was provided at Appendix 1 to the report.

At its meeting on 24 May 2016, the Cabinet received a report by the Chief Executive on the current position in relation to Gallowgate Square, Largs. The report set out the background to a decision by the Council to suspend the Gallowgate Square development pending the outcome of further consideration of the Masterplan priorities, as recommended by the North Coast Committee. The report also detailed that three Members of the former North Coast Area Committee had advised that they wished to proceed with the Gallowgate Square development and that a review of the Masterplan priorities was not required.

The Cabinet, at its meeting on 24 May 2016, agreed, in terms of Standing Order 21, to suspend Standing Order 23, to allow consideration of the matter. The Cabinet then agreed that officers now proceed to take forward the Gallowgate Square development in line with the decision of Cabinet on 15 September 2016.

Subsequently, a Call In request was received from Councillors Clarkson, Cullinane and Reid in the following terms:-

"Reason for Call in -To question whether the Gallowgate Square project is the most urgent priority for spending on the Largs Master Plan and to question if the amount of money allocated to it is likely to be a profitable investment.

Desired Outcome - That the Scrutiny Committee recommends that activity and spending on the Gallowgate Square project is suspended until there is a full review by North Coast Councillors and Council Officers to confirm the Master Plan priorities."

The Head of Democratic Services summarised the procedure for considering the Call In request and set out the circumstances surrounding the Cabinet decision. Members sought and received clarification on the background to the decisions taken in relation to this matter.

Thereafter, the Members who had requested the Call In were invited to speak. Councillor Reid addressed the Committee in support of the Call In request, querying whether the Gallowgate Square project represented the best use of capital funds within Largs. He cited the condition of the Promenade as a long-standing outdoor access issue and referred to the use made of the Promenade by the visitors and the local community.

The other signatories to the Call In request were also invited to speak but declined to do so.

The Chair then invited Councillor Burns to address the meeting on behalf of Councillor Hill as the relevant Cabinet Member. Councillor Burns made reference to the extensive consultation exercise which had been undertaken and had identified the Gallowgate Square development as one of the top ranked projects, together with Main Street/Tron Square/the Ferry Terminal. Councillor Burns further advised that, whilst the cost associated with other projects within the Masterplan exceeded £1m, the Gallowgate Square project was currently affordable. Councillor Burns concluded by summarising the various stages of consultation and formal decision-making which had led to the Cabinet decision to proceed with the Gallowgate Square project.

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

- the cost of the various projects within the Masterplan and the availability of funding; and
- the size of Gallowgate Square and its likely use

Councillor Marshall was then invited by the Chair to address the meeting as a local Elected Member. Councillor Marshall advised that three of the four local Members were in favour of the Gallowgate Square project proceeding at this stage and queried the accuracy of the North Coast Area Committee Minute which had recommended to Council suspension of the project. Councillor Marshall pointed out that the decision to proceed with Gallowgate Square as part of the Masterplan had not been called in previously. He added that the project had the support of local people and businesses, including the Largs Bid.

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

- whether a review of the Masterplan priorities had already been undertaken and the nature of the review proposed by the Call In request;
- the accuracy of the North Coast Area Committee Minute which recommended to the Council suspension of the Gallowgate Square project; and
- the likely outcome of any recommendation to Cabinet to adopt the terms of the Call In.

Councillor Gallagher, seconded by Councillor Munro, moved that the Committee accept the terms of the Call In request.

As an amendment, Councillor McMillan, seconded by Councillor Brown, moved to reject the terms of the Call In request.

On a division, there voted for the amendment 3 and for the motion 3 and, on the casting vote of the Chair, the motion was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to recommend to the Cabinet that activity and spending on the Gallowgate Square project is suspended until there is a full review by North Coast Councillors and Council Officers to confirm the Master Plan priorities.

The Meeting ended at 1.25 p.m.