

Audit and Scrutiny Committee
Tuesday, 06 March 2018

Present

Marie Burns, Alan Hill and John Sweeney.

Also Present

Ronnie McNicol and Joe Cullinane.

In Attendance

A. Sutton, Head of Service (Connected Communities) (Economy and Communities); A. Fraser, Head of Democratic Services, H. Clancy, Committee Services Officer and M. Anderson, Committee Services Team Leader (Chief Executive's Service).

Chair

Councillor Burns in the Chair.

Apologies

Tom Marshall and Donald Reid.

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: Communities – Short Life Working Group

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a Call In Request received in respect of the decision taken by Cabinet at its meeting on 20 February 2018 in relation to the report on the Communities Short Life Working Group. A copy of the Cabinet report was provided at Appendix 1 to the report.

The Cabinet, at its meeting on 20 February 2018, considered a report by the Executive Director (Economy and Communities) on the reconvening of a short life working group, from 1 March 2018, comprising North Ayrshire Council and the North Ayrshire Federation of Community Associations (NAFCO) to address financial challenges faced by the public and voluntary sector in relation to the role of community associations and how they provide services to our communities.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) reconvene the short life working group from 1 March 2018 comprising North Ayrshire Council and the North Ayrshire Federation of Community Organisations and that the format of the Group should be:- • 3 x NAFCO • 3 x NAC Officer • 3 x Elected member (Chair - Cllr McPhater, 1 x SNP; 1 x Scottish Conservative and Unionist - with an Independent Member being

offered a place if none of the Conservatives take up the place).; (b) that the Clerk contact the SNP and Conservative and Unionist Group Leaders asking for their nominations to the Working Group; and (c) receive future reports in relation to themes which may emerge from the recommendations of the working group.

A Call In Request, signed by Councillors Barr, McNicol and Donald L. Reid, and referring in particular to (b) and (c) of the above decision, was in the following terms:-

“Reason for Call In

The recommendations of the working group Working group should have cross party elected membership and that the format of the group should be: 3 NAFCO/3 NAC officers/3 Elected Members (Cllr McPhater, 1 x SNP, 1 Conservative and Unionist —with an Independent Member being offered a place if none of the Conservatives take up the place. Why as an Independent Member not invited to attend the working group?

Desired Outcome

Referred back to Cabinet to reconsider decision and we recommend that all future reports in relation to themes which may emerge from the recommendations of the working group be reported to future meeting of the full Council.”

The Head of Democratic Services summarised the procedure for considering the Call In Request and set out the circumstances surrounding the Cabinet decision.

Thereafter, Councillor McNicol was invited to speak on behalf of the Members who had requested the Call In. Councillor McNicol expressed the view that the Independent Members should also be invited to serve on the working group, rather than being offered a place only in the circumstances set out in the Cabinet Minute. Councillor McNicol also intimated that, given the importance of community centres to Elected Members and the communities they serve, any recommendations arising from the working group should be considered by the full Council.

The Chair then invited Councillor Cullinane, on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Communities, to address the meeting. Councillor Cullinane advised that it had been the intention of the Cabinet to extend the invitation to Independent Members and the Conservative and Unionist Group collectively. He intimated that he was not averse to an additional place being offered to allow an Independent Member to serve on the working group, albeit that NAFCO may also wish an additional place in the interests of parity. Councillor Cullinane indicated that he had no objection to the suggestion that the working group report to the Council rather than to the Cabinet.

The Head of Service (Connected Communities) (Economy and Communities) invited Members to consider the importance of parity of esteem in the Council's work with NAFCO, as well as the issue of manageability given the work to be carried out by the working group within a short timescale.

Members discussed the need for parity between Elected Member and NAFCO representation and considered the implications in terms of timing of the working group reporting to Council rather than to the Cabinet.

Councillor Hill, seconded by Councillor Burns, moved to accept, in part, the terms of the Call In and recommend to the Cabinet that the Elected Member representation on the working group be increased to four to allow the appointment of an Independent Member, with a further place also offered to NAFCO in the interests of parity, but that no change be made to the decision that the working group report to the Cabinet.

Councillor Sweeney moved to accept in part the terms of the Call In and recommend to the Cabinet that the Elected Member representation on the Working Group remain at three, with the Conservative Group and Independent Members being offered one place between them. There being no seconder and no further amendment, the motion was carried.

The meeting ended at 10.10 a.m.