

Cabinet
1 September 2015

IRVINE, 1 September 2015 - At a Meeting of the Cabinet of North Ayrshire Council at 2.30 p.m.

Present

Willie Gibson, Alan Hill, Marie Burns, John Bruce, Anthea Dickson, Tony Gurney and Ruth Maguire; Very Reverend Matthew Canon McManus and Elizabeth Highton (Church Representatives) (Agenda Items 3 and 4), G. Smith (Teaching representative) (Agenda Items 3 and 4) and Erin McAuley, Courtney Gemmell, Emily Aitken and Megan Reid (Youth Representatives) (Agenda Items 3 and 4).

Also Present

John Ferguson, Grace McLean, Catherine McMillan and Grace McLean (all item 3 only), and Donald Reid.

In Attendance

E. Murray, Chief Executive; J. Butcher, Executive Director and M. Shedden, Head Teacher (Springside Primary School) (Education and Youth Employment); L. Friel, Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Support); K. Yeomans, Executive Director and J. McKnight, Senior Manager (Community Development) (Economy and Communities); A. Fraser, Head of Democratic Services, R. Moore, Communications Officer and D. McCaw, Committee Services Officer (Chief Executive's).

Chair

Councillor Gibson in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Mark Fraser (Church Representative).

1. Declarations of Interest

In terms of Standing Order 10 and Section 5 of the Code of Conduct for Councillors, Councillor Burns, as a North Ayrshire Leisure Limited Board Member declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 7 (North Ayrshire Council, sportscotland and KA Leisure Partnership Agreement: 1 April 2015 until 31 March 2019).

2. Minutes

The accuracy of the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 August 2015 was confirmed and the Minutes signed in accordance with Paragraph 7 (1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

3. National Attainment Challenge: North Ayrshire Strategy

The Cabinet received a presentation by the Executive Director (Education & Youth Employment) on North Ayrshire's response to the National Attainment Challenge and on providing transformational change within North Ayrshire schools through the introduction of a professional learning academy rationale.

Members asked questions and were provided with further information in relation to:-

- whether there is enough capacity within schools to continue current teaching practices whilst trying to make improvements to systems currently in place; and
- the support required to ensure the removal of barriers to learning for young people; and
- the focus on nurturing to ensure young people get support where it is needed.

Noted.

4. Education and Youth Employment Accessibility Strategy 2015 - 2018

Submitted report by Executive Director (Education & Youth Employment) on (a) progress with the Education and Youth Employment's Accessibility Strategy 2015-18 and Action Plan Framework (Appendix 1); and (b) the approaches by the Accessibility Strategy Steering Group to ensure the Council meet legislative requirements.

Members were provided with clarification on:-

- whether there are children in schools who suffer from undefined additional support needs in terms of their health and wellbeing;
- that there are generic and specialist support staff in place within schools to support a wide range of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties; and
- accessibility issues in relation to buildings and property which can create difficulties for children with complex needs.

The Cabinet agreed (a) to note and approve the content of the final version of the Accessibility Strategy and Action Plan framework; and (b) to approve the approaches outlined by the Accessibility Strategy Steering Group in order to meet legislative requirements.

5. Raising the Quality of Committee Reports

Submitted report by the Chief Executive setting out proposals for a comprehensive phased programme and timetable to improve the quality of reports being presented at Council Committees and Corporate Management Team meetings.

Members were provided with clarification that acronyms within reports should be detailed in full in the first instance.

There was discussion on the content of Advisory Panel Minutes. Members were of the view that advice and guidance could be provided by Committee Services to staff who provide support to Advisory Panel meetings to ensure clarity of style in relation to the minuting of discussion points.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the phased programme and timetable to improve the quality of reports, as detailed in section 3 of the report.

6. Council Tax (Variation for Unoccupied Dwellings) (Scotland) Regulations 2013

Submitted report by Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on methods to encourage owners of long terms empty dwellings to bring properties back into use by increasing council tax.

Members were provided with clarification on:-

- that buildings purchased for development, the condition of which subsequently deteriorates, would fall within the categories mentioned within the report; and
- that repossessed properties would not be included.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) apply a council tax levy on empty property which has been unoccupied for 12 months or more; or for property marketed for sale or let and which is unoccupied for a minimum of 2 years, of 150% from 1 April 2016 and 200% from 1 April 2017; and (b) apply a civil penalty of up to £500 where an owner of a long term empty property fails to engage with the Council.

7. North Ayrshire Council, sportscotland and KA Leisure Partnership Agreement: 1 April 2015 until 31 March 2019

Submitted report by Executive Director (Economy and Communities) outlining the scope, priorities and principles of the 2015/19 Partnership Agreement (Appendix 1) between sportscotland, KA Leisure and North Ayrshire Council.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) note the opportunities offered by the Partnership Agreement which will invest a total of £1,459,800 by sportscotland over four years for Active Schools and Community Sports Hubs; (b) an annual in principle contribution of £140,000 per annum for the duration of the agreement, totalling £560,000; and (c) receive to receive annual reports on the progress of the Partnership Agreement during 2015/19.

8. Ayrshire Growth Deal

Submitted report by Executive Director (Economy and Communities) on the preparation of a bid for a Regional Growth Deal in collaboration with South and East Ayrshire Councils.

The Cabinet agreed to approve (a) joint working with South and East Ayrshire Councils on the development of a regional growth bid; (b) the procurement of technical support in developing a business case to support the bid; and (c) the commitment of up to £50,000 from existing budgets to secure any internal or external support required.

9. Exclusion of the Public

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 items of business on the grounds indicated in terms of Paragraph 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

9.1 Social Work Complaint Review Committee: Complaint by Mr C

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the findings and recommendations arising from the Social Work Complaints Review Committee meeting held on 11 August 2015.

The Cabinet agreed to accept the Committee's recommendation not to uphold any part of the complaint.

The meeting ended at 3.50 p.m.