

The Executive of North Ayrshire Council
12 May 2009

IRVINE, 12 May 2009 - At a Meeting of the Executive of North Ayrshire Council at 2.30 p.m.

Present

David O'Neill, John Reid, Tom Barr, John Bell and Margaret McDougall.

In Attendance

I. Snodgrass (Chief Executive); C. Kirk, Corporate Director and M. Docherty, Head of Service (Educational Services); T. Orr, Corporate Director and J. Currie, Head of Environment and Related Services (Property Services); I.T. Mackay, Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Protective); D. Nibloe, Chief Accountant (Finance); D. MacRitchie, Manager (Children and Families Fieldwork) (Social Services); J. Montgomery, General Manager, M. McKeown, Team Leader - Committee Services and J. Stevenson, Communications Officer (Chief Executive's).

Chair

Councillor O'Neill in the Chair.

1. Corporate Parenting

Submitted joint report by the Corporate Directors (Social Services) and (Educational Services) on corporate parenting within North Ayrshire.

The Executive received a report on the concept of corporate parenting at its meeting held on 28 October 2008. At that time the Executive agreed (a) to note the progress being made to develop a Corporate Parenting Strategy for North Ayrshire; and (b) to approve the proposals to reconstitute the Corporate Parenting Group as detailed in the report subject to the Corporate Director (Social Services) identifying how elected Members can be more directly involved in the work of the Group.

The Corporate Parenting Group, established under the chair of Mary Docherty, Head of Service (Educational Services), has commissioned the Corporate Parenting Strategy and is in the final stages of completing an action plan to improve corporate parenting in North Ayrshire. In line with the Executive's earlier decision, ways are being explored to ensure that elected Members engage meaningfully in the corporate parenting agenda. The Corporate Parenting Group has organised various training and awareness raising events for staff and elected Members such as the drama "Broad Shoulders" which was delivered to large audiences at the Harbour Arts Centre.

North Ayrshire is one of the most deprived areas in Scotland, and issues such as poverty, unemployment, substance misuse and poor health are huge challenges for the Council. In 2007/08, the Reporter in North Ayrshire received the sixth highest number of referrals in Scotland with only the largest authorities in Scotland having higher numbers of referrals. The police across Scotland are the main source of referrals to the Reporter, with a Scottish average of 89% of all referrals in 2007/08. As a result of the extremely high number of referrals to the Reporter locally, high numbers of reports are requested, resulting in high numbers of children's hearings taking place. These facts contribute to the high number of supervision requirements made by children's panels in North Ayrshire.

The Council's looked after children live in a range of settings depending on their assessed needs. North Ayrshire has a relatively high number of looked after children for the reasons stated above and the increase in substance misuse has led to children becoming accommodated at an earlier age, with most of these children not being able to return home. Whilst corporate parenting responsibilities for Councils have existed for some time, recent publications have highlighted the need to improve outcomes for looked after children and young people. An essential element of a successful corporate parenting strategy is the involvement of elected Members. It is intended that future reports will inform elected Members of key matters regarding the corporate parenting agenda.

The appendices to the report provided specific information on:

- The number of Looked After children in North Ayrshire in comparison with other authorities;
- The number of children who started and ceased to be Looked After by the Council each year in the period 2005/06 to 2007/08;
- The legal reasons for children being Looked After; and
- The length of time that are children Looked After in their episode of care.

Members asked questions in relation to the effectiveness of the strategy, the need to provide ongoing support to children leaving care, and in relation to how the Council promotes and monitors the educational attainment levels of Looked After children.

The Executive agreed to (a) note the information presented in the report; (b) receive further reports on (i) how the Council compares with other authorities in terms of the destinations of children leaving care and (ii) the operation and impact of the new children's units within North Ayrshire; and (c) that the educational attainment of Looked After children form part of wider educational attainment report to the Education Executive.

2. Trading Accounts Review

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) on the redesignation of trading operations that fall below the revised "significance" level, pending further guidance from CIPFA/LASAAC.

The Local Government Scotland Act 2003 repealed the legislation governing Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) which led to the creation of Direct Labour Organisations (DLOs) and Direct Service Organisations (DSOs). In its place, the 2003 Act introduced the requirement for statutory "trading accounts" to be maintained for "significant trading operations". From 2003/2004 local authorities were required to identify which activities should be treated as trading accounts. In March 2005, following a review, the Council approved the following five trading operations:-

- (a) Building and Works
- (b) Catering
- (c) Building Cleaning
- (d) Roads and
- (e) Transport (vehicle maintenance and fleet management)

Since the original review, the Council has agreed a policy on reserves and balances that includes a level of acceptable general reserve (3%). It is considered that this level of provision should now be the basis for the "significance" test. Turnover for each of the above trading operations has been compared to this figure and in all cases, with the exception of Building and Works, it was found that turnover was less than the 3% provision. It was proposed therefore that the Executive should agree to redesignate the four areas not meeting the significance test thereby leaving only one statutory trading operation i.e Building and Works. Revised guidance on trading operations will be issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)/Local Authority (Scotland) Accounts Advisory Committee (LASAAC) in the near future and it was proposed that the position should be further reviewed on receipt of the new guidance.

The Executive agreed to the re-designation of those trading operations falling below the revised significance level, pending the receipt of further guidance from CIPFA/LASAAC.

3. Scottish Housing Quality Standard Housing Conditions Survey 2009/10

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on tenders for the proposed conditions survey of North Ayrshire Council's housing stock.

The Council is required by the Scottish Government to appraise the condition of its housing stock, and ensure that its stock meets the standards laid down in the Scottish Housing Quality Standards (SHQS). In addition, the Scottish Housing Regulator carried out an inspection of Housing Services between 21 April and 15 May 2008, and made a number of recommendations for improvement, particularly in the area of Asset Management. The Council's response to the Regulator's recommendations was to develop a Housing Improvement Plan. This Improvement Plan was approved by the Executive in September 2008, and includes a proposal to carry out a stock condition survey of the Council's housing stock.

Tenders were sought from suitably qualified consultants to undertake the survey. Of the five consultants invited to tender for the work, only two returned tenders by the deadline. The returned tenders were evaluated on a 60/40 quality/price split. An abstract of the tender submissions was appended to the report. It is considered that the tender submitted by John Martin Partnership represented the most economically advantageous tender to the Council.

The Executive agreed to award the contract to the John Martin Partnership in the sum of £769,842.00, as set out in the report.

4. Tenders for Community Mediation Service

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) seeking approval to invite tenders for the provision of a community mediation service in North Ayrshire.

Community mediation is a means of resolving neighbour disputes and antisocial behaviour, by assisting the parties involved to reach an agreed solution to the problem. The provision of a community mediation service is an important element of the North Ayrshire Antisocial Behaviour Strategy. The existing service is provided by Sacro (Safeguarding Communities - Reducing Offending) and there is now a need to put a formal contract in place through open tender. In terms of the Council's Standing Orders relating to Contracts, elected Member approval is required prior to tenders for contracts for services with a value over £150,000 being invited.

The Executive agreed to authorise the Head of Housing and Building Services to proceed with procurement for the provision of a community mediation service by means of a Measured Term Contract for 18 months, with an option for one year's extension subject to funding and performance, as set out in the report.

5. Stevenston: Lumsden Place: Proposed Refurbishment of Hayocks Primary School

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on tenders received for the proposed refurbishment at Hayocks Primary School, Stevenston.

The General Services Capital Programme makes provision for refurbishment works to Hayocks Primary School, Stevenston. Tenders for the works were obtained from a short list selected from the Council's Approved List and in accordance with the relevant Code of Procedure. The result of the tendering process was set out in the appendix to the report.

The Executive agreed to accept the lowest offer (as revised) submitted by James Frew Ltd., Stevenston, in the sum of £826,000.

6. Public Convenience Provision within North Ayrshire Council

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on the location and maintenance of the public conveniences in North Ayrshire.

At its special meeting on 12 February 2009, and as part of the budgetary process, the Council agreed that the Corporate Director (Property Services) should submit a report to the Executive of North Ayrshire Council in respect of the provision of public toilets through the Council area.

Within North Ayrshire there are currently 47 public conveniences. Three of these are permanently attended and two are seasonally attended with 28 being covered by mobile operative units. All facilities are maintained to a cleanliness standard and are replenished with materials on a daily basis. There are 14 automatic public conveniences which are currently covered by varying lease contracts, up to a period of 15 years. Five of these units are superloos - suitable for disabled users. The units are serviced and maintained through J C Decaux who run the term contracts. The appendix to the report provided details of the locations, opening hours and description of the facilities, and detailed if they are attended or covered by mobile operatives. The report provided details of the levels of use of, and income generated by, automatic public conveniences, and of the comparative costs of establishing and operating automated facilities compared with traditional build toilets.

There is currently a need to carry out a survey of all the traditional public conveniences in order to establish if they can be brought up to a full modernised standard, or otherwise maintained in current state or demolished with the further alternative to introduce automatic public conveniences as a replacement plan. The modernisation of the existing toilets by replacing them with traditional toilets would require a capital bid. Consideration can also be given to maintaining the current attendant provisions or consider servicing all traditional toilets by mobile operations. The alternative would be to phase in the provision of automatic public conveniences which would require an initial capital sum for each plinth and thereafter a revenue cost to cover the terms of the lease.

Noted.

7. North Ayrshire Community Health Partnership Committee: Minutes of Meeting held on 31 March 2009

Submitted report, being the Minutes of a Meeting of the North Ayrshire Community Health Partnership Committee held on 31 March 2009.

Noted.

The meeting ended at 2.55 p.m.