

Cabinet
30 April 2013

IRVINE, 30 April 2013 - At a Meeting of the Cabinet of North Ayrshire Council at 2.30 p.m.

Present

Willie Gibson, Alan Hill, Marie Burns, Anthea Dickson, Tony Gurney and Alex McLean; E. Higon, M. Fraser and Very Reverend M. Canon McManus (Church Representatives); G. Smith (Teaching Representative); and P. Gillespie and N. McDonald (Youth Representatives);

Also Present

Matthew Brown, John Bruce, Joe Cullinane, John Ferguson, Alex Gallagher, Tom Marshall and Donald Reid.

In Attendance

E. Murray, Chief Executive; L. Friel, Corporate Director, G. Macgregor, Head of HR and Organisational Development, S. Humphries, Senior Manager (Revenues and Benefits), T. Reaney, Team Manager (Corporate Procurement) (Finance and Corporate Support); C. Kirk, Corporate Director, A Sutton, Head of Community and Culture, M. Docherty, Head of Education (3-18), D. Carracher, Senior Manager (Inclusion) and F. Rodman, Senior Manager (Early Years and Child Care); I. Colvin, Corporate Director, O. Clayton, Head of Community Care and Housing and A. Adrain, Divisional Manager (HQ) (Social Services and Health); K. Yeomans, Head of Development Planning and A. Laurenson, Team Manager (Regeneration) (Development and Environment); S. Bale and A. Todd, Policy and Performance Officers, M. Rae, Acting Policy and Performance Officer, E. McDonald, Communications Officer and M. Anderson, Committee Services Officer (Chief Executive's Service).

Chair

Councillor Gibson in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

1. Declarations of Interest

In terms of Standing Order 16 and Section 5 of the Code of Conduct for Councillors, Councillor Dickson, as the spouse of a director of an early years provider, declared an indirect, pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 5: Early Years Developments and took no part in the discussion.

2. Minutes

The accuracy of the Minutes of the previous ordinary meeting of the Cabinet held on 26 March 2013, was agreed and the Minutes signed in accordance with paragraph 7(1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

3. Attainment, School Leaver Destinations, Attendance and Exclusions for Young People Looked After by North Ayrshire Council: Session 2011/12

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) on the attainment, post school destinations and overall attendance of pupils still at school who are looked after by North Ayrshire Council.

The attainment of North Ayrshire's looked after young people has seen significant year on year improvement since 2008, details of which were provided in Section 2 of the report.

Among the support and resources being targeted towards continuing to improve outcomes for looked after young people, are the following:-

- proposals to increase the involvement of Elected Members and Senior Officers in the Council's corporate responsibilities towards looked after young people;
- improvements arising from the secondment of an experienced manager to the post of Education Development Co-ordinator for Looked After Children;
- Psychology support to North Ayrshire Council Children's Units;
- weekly homework clubs in Children's Units;
- Pupil Support Service Extended Outreach, offering intensive support to looked after pupils identified by schools as most at risk of progressing to a negative post-school destination;
- a targeted Activity Agreement programme for up to 18 looked after young people who do not qualify for Throughcare Services;
- a 'data hub' pilot to improve the sharing of data between Education and Skills and Skills Development Scotland and, in the longer term, other services and organisations; and
- a Data Access Agreement with the Scottish Government's Analytical Services Division, which will improve the monitoring of educational outcomes for looked after young people.

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

- the source of the figures provided at Section 1.2 of the report;
- whether data in relation to young people looked after by other authorities but attending school within North Ayrshire, was analysed separately;
- whether there were looked after children on the school roll of all North Ayrshire primary and secondary schools;
- the importance of monitoring the progress of looked after children to ensure a longer-term positive destination after further education and/or training;
- the attainment figures for looked after children when compared with the wider North Ayrshire school population;
- the operation of homework clubs within residential units and schools; and
- whether young people subject to a supervision order were regarded as 'looked after' in the context of the report.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) note the information provided in the report; and (b) approve the targeting of support and resources to improve outcomes for these young people as detailed within the report.

4. Devolved School Management

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) on a revised Devolved School Management Scheme of Delegation for Educational Establishments.

Devolved School Management (DSM) was introduced in 1993. It required councils to devolve school budgets to headteachers with the twin aims of improving local decision making and providing more flexibility to headteachers in responding to the needs of individual schools.

In 2011 the Scottish Government and COSLA agreed that the 2006 DSM Guidelines should be reviewed and amended. The resulting Devolved School Management 2012 Guidelines were published in June 2012. The Council's review of its DSM scheme was undertaken by a group including representation from headteachers, school Administrative and Finance Officers (AFOs), Education and Skills Headquarters staff and staff from Corporate Finance. The key principles of the review were set out at Section 2.4 of the report.

A proposed revised DSM Scheme of Delegation for Educational Establishments was as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the revised Devolved School Management Scheme of Delegation for Educational Establishments set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

5. Early Years Developments

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) on current developments in early years provision and preparations for the delivery of the recommendations in the Children and Young People's Bill.

The Council works in partnership with 22 private and voluntary establishments (partner providers) to provide early learning and childcare for children aged 3 to 5 from the month after their third birthday. The report provided information on the implications of the Children and Young People's Bill and gave contextual information on the challenging financial climate faced by local private and third sector providers.

It is proposed that, in each locality, there will be at least one establishment where parents can access 600 hours early learning and childcare, including an extended day (8.00 a.m. until 6.00 p.m.) and 3-hour sessions including lunch. The following initial steps to respond to the demands of families and of existing and potential providers were set out:-

- an amendment to the existing admissions criteria to include the month of birth;
- an increase in payments to partner providers from £1,625 to £1,650 from August 2013;
- a planned series of meeting with early years providers;
- a review of the quality and suitability of North Ayrshire Council accommodation used by partner providers;
- plans to stabilise and grow the private and voluntary provision within North Ayrshire; and
- support to partner providers in the third and voluntary sector.

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

- the fundraising activities of private and third sector providers;
- the provision of nursery care in Kilbirnie;
- the staffing and other implications of seeking to offer flexible early years provision; and
- the early years provision delivered by the Council in primary schools and early years centres.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) note the current developments in respect of early years provision; and (b) approve the following proposals to further develop the sector, namely (i) inclusion of month of birth to existing admissions criteria; (ii) an increase in partner payment to £1,650; (iii) a review of the use of available accommodation in schools and community facilities; (iv) extending and funding the strategic management support for the sector from The Ayrshire Community Trust; and (v) continued work with all available partners to develop plans for flexible early learning and childcare to include full day provision.

6. Welfare Reform

6.1 Impact of New Social Sector Size Criteria on Housing Policy

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services and Health) on the impact of the introduction of the new social sector size criteria on Council tenants and the Housing Service. The Cabinet also received a presentation by the Head of Community Care and Housing on the implications of the new size criteria and proposed mitigation measures.

At its meeting of 6 March 2013, the Council considered motions in respect of the Social Sector Size Criteria and action by the Council in respect of rent arrears. In response, the report outlined the key issues and risks arising from the introduction of the social sector size criteria and offered alternative proposals to address these.

Section 2 of the report summarised the current position in terms of the social sector size criteria and its implications in relation to the Council's Arrears and Evictions Policy and homeless temporary accommodation. The wider strategic implications and actions taken to mitigate the impact of the new size criteria were also outlined. Section 3 of the report considered the implications of the motions presented to the Council on 6 March 2013, in terms of rent arrears, the potential reclassification of bedrooms, and the Homelessness service.

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

- rent collection levels in the first month following implementation of the Social Sector Size Criteria;
- whether press coverage of councils' approaches to evictions was having a negative impact on rent collection rates and tenants' willingness to engage with the Council about arrears;
- the profile of social sector housing provision in Scotland and the shortage of one-bedroom properties for rent; and
- the reaction of local housing associations to the social sector size criteria.

The Cabinet agreed (a) to note the action taken to date to mitigate the impact of the new Social Sector Size Criteria; (b) that, for a period of one year, there should be no eviction from mainstream Council properties where rent arrears are solely due to the under-occupation penalty, and where it can be demonstrated that the tenant is engaging with the Council to make payment towards the arrears; (c) not to pursue tenants in Council homeless temporary accommodation for under-occupation arrears, pending clarification of the definition of exempt supported accommodation from the DWP; (d) to reclassify properties where there is a boxroom which does not meet the specified size criteria; (e) to reclassify properties where the installation of a through floor lift has effectively reduced the number of bedrooms; (f) to respond on an individual basis to applications from tenants to have properties reclassified on other grounds taking into account the facts of each case and emerging DWP guidance; and (g) to amend the current approach within the Local Housing Strategy to allow the development and purchase of one-bedroom properties in the Social Housing sector.

6.2 Discretionary Housing Payment Operational Procedures

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on the Discretionary Housing Payment operational procedure.

The Cabinet approved the Council's Discretionary Housing Payment Policy on the 23 October 2012 in anticipation of a number of welfare reforms. DHP is paid in addition to a claimant's Housing Benefit for claimants suffering financial hardship and who need help in meeting their housing costs. DHP funding has been prioritised to provide Housing Benefit claimants affected by Social Sector Size Criteria, the Benefit Cap, Local Housing Allowance restrictions and General Hardship.

Proposed Discretionary Housing Payment operational procedures were set out at Appendix 1 to the report. Section 2 of the report summarised each of these criterion in turn and the financial implications were provided at Section 4.1.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) approve the Discretionary Housing Payment operational procedures as set out at Appendix 1 to the report; and (b) note that a further report will be provided on the Discretionary Housing Payment fund after the first six months of operation.

6.3 Scottish Welfare Fund

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on the Scottish Welfare Fund and the operational procedures which have been developed.

The Social Welfare Fund is a grant-only scheme, which does not need to be repaid and which provides Crisis grants and Community Care grants. A maximum Crisis award of £500 is available and Community Care grants can be made up to £2,000. In kind support is also provided, as are travel and food bank vouchers. A total of £1.068m has been allocated for use in North Ayrshire and will be administered by the Benefits service.

Proposed operational procedures for the fund were set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the rationale for, and appropriateness of, using Primark payment cards for Community Care grants.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) approve the Scottish Welfare Fund operational procedures as set out at Appendix 1 to the report; and (b) note that a further report will be provided on the Scottish Welfare Fund after the first six months of operation.

6.4 The Impact of Welfare Reform on the North Ayrshire Housing Register

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services and Health) on proposed amendments to the North Ayrshire Housing Allocation Policy which seek to improve the rehousing prospects of tenants affected by the under-occupancy penalty.

The North Ayrshire Housing Register (NAHR) is a common housing register with four partner landlords: North Ayrshire Council, Irvine Housing Association, Cunninghame Housing Association and ANCHO. Houses are allocated to people on the NAHR in accordance with the North Ayrshire Housing Allocation Policy (NAHAP), which is a shared allocation policy overseen by the North Ayrshire Housing Register Steering Group.

The Steering Group evaluated a number of options to mitigate the impact of welfare reform proposals on applicants for housing and address apparent inconsistencies with the allocation policy. Section 3 explored a number of possible changes to the allocation policy and made recommendations in respect of two, namely the reclassification of a proportion of one-bedroom Council-owned amenity properties which are currently only allocated to older people, and an increase in weighting given to under-occupancy to increase the under-occupation points to 50 points per extra bedroom.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on any potentially negative impact on partnership working of the application of the Suspension Policy.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) improve priority for rehousing tenants by increasing the points awarded for under-occupancy to 50 per "surplus" bedroom; and (b) increase the availability of one-bedroom properties by approving the reclassification of approximately 300 one-bedroom amenity properties to housing for all ages.

7. Council Plan Action Plan 2013/14, Performance Management Strategy Action Plan 2013/14

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the Council Plan Action Plan 2013/14 and the Performance Management Strategy Action Plan 2013/14.

Appendices 1 and 2 to the report summarised progress in relation the Council Plan Action Plan 2013/14 and the Performance Management Strategy Action Plan 2013/14, respectively.

The Council Plan Action Plan indicator - *Percentage of municipal refuse recycled and composted* - has been amended to *Percentage of household refuse recycled and composted*. This reflects a change by Audit Scotland, whereby only household waste is now used to measure Scotland's progress towards the recycling targets. The indicator - *Total population* - has been added to the Council Plan Action Plan to reflect Council activity to halt and reverse the projected declining population of North Ayrshire.

A partnership theme has been added to the Performance Management Strategy Action Plan to reflect the significant partnership improvement activity which is taking place.

Six-monthly progress reports on both Action Plans will be presented to the Council's Extended Corporate Management team (ECMT), Cabinet and Scrutiny and Petitions Committee.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on progress in respect of joint budgeting with Community Planning Partners.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) approve the Council Plan Action Plan 13/14 and the Performance Management Strategy Action Plan 2013/14; and (b) refer the report to the Scrutiny and Petitions Committee for its consideration.

8. Response to Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 2012: A Business Case for Change

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the response to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 2012.

The latest version of the SIMD was published on 18 December 2012. Overall, it indicates that deprivation in North Ayrshire remains significantly above the Scottish Average and that there are pockets of deep-rooted severe deprivation in certain areas.

A review of the 2010 Business Case for Change has been undertaken by relevant Community Planning Partners. A draft document was attached at Appendix 1 to the report. The report proposed that it be endorsed by Cabinet and that the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive use it to make the case to Scottish Government for continuing and additional assistance for North Ayrshire.

Discussion took place on the value of using the document to lobby both the Scottish and UK Governments.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) to endorse the Business Case for Change 2013; and (b) that the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive use the document to make the case to the Scottish and UK Governments for continuing and additional assistance for North Ayrshire.

9. Equality Outcomes

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the proposed equality outcomes for North Ayrshire Council.

The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 require the Council to publish a set of equality outcomes which it considers will enable it to better perform the general equality duty. The Council must agree outcomes which will help eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations.

Equality outcomes have been proposed on the basis that they are short to medium term (2 – 4 years) and, wherever possible, the protected characteristic targeted has been specified. The proposed outcomes are structured under the Council's four core objectives as detailed in Section 3.2 of the report. Appendix 1 to the report provided additional contextual information, the consultation programme and the protected characteristics mapped against the outcomes.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the proposed equality outcomes set out in the report.

10. General Services Revenue Estimates 2013/14: Update

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on the General Services Revenue Budget for 2013/14.

Total property cost budgets for the Council for 2013/14 amount to £13.416m. These have been analysed by current Directorate and also by managing service, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report. In addition to the current devolved budgets, in 2013/14 the Central Repairs and Major Revenue budgets of approximately £4.5m have been combined into a new Property Maintenance budget, with the prioritisation of spend approved by the Council's Capital Programme and Assets Group (CPAG).

In order to properly embed the 'corporate landlord' approach to asset management, the report proposed that all budgets relating to repair and maintenance of properties transfer from services into the Property Management and Investment services. In addition, to further eliminate the need to cross-charge between services, it was proposed that all budgets relating to the cleaning of properties and the maintenance of grounds transfer from services to the Environment division of the Development and Environment Service.

Budgets amounting to £13.416m have been removed from services and allocated to new property budgets within Property Management and Investment (£9.842m) and Development and Environment (£3.574m) and these changes are reflected in the budget matrix set out at Appendix 2 to the report.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the General Services Revenue Estimates matrix outlined at Appendix 2 to the report.

11. Saltcoats Town Hall Redevelopment Project

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on progress to appoint a Design Team to support the preparation of technical design and procurement information and the preparation of funding/grant applications to relevant sources.

Based on the preferred redevelopment option for Saltcoats Town Hall, when complete, the building would accommodate Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenson Housing Offices, Saltcoats Registration Office and a local three towns Heritage Centre hub. The interior of the building would be remodelled, involving the construction of a mezzanine level within the main hall. The adaptations would create an environment which would improve access to Council Services, form updated staff accommodation and provide modern and flexible space for community use. The overall construction cost of the preferred option is expected to be approximately £2.9 million, rising to a full project cost of approximately £3.5 million when professional fees, furniture/equipment, ICT infrastructure, telephone installations, etc. are included.

The report proposed that a Design Team be procured to progress the proposals sufficiently to support the development of the project. In order to ensure continuity of approach, it is anticipated the existing design team commissioned by Irvine Bay would be assigned to North Ayrshire Council.

The Cabinet agreed (a) to note progress to date relating to the Saltcoats Town Hall redevelopment project; (b) to approve the preferred option for development; and (c) that a Design Team is appointed to take the project forward.

12. Kerelaw Castle

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on the cost of the works required to stabilise Kerelaw Castle.

Kerelaw Castle, which forms part of the Stevenston Common Good, is a Scheduled Monument with legal protection under the Historic Environment (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill 2011.

The ATK Partnership (Structural Engineers) report of 27 September 2011 identified six areas of high priority. Officers recommended funding be sought to stabilise and carry out urgent remedial work to Kerelaw Castle. The immediate costs of making Kerelaw Castle safe are approximately £0.099m.

The castle is owned by Stevenston Common Good Fund which currently has an overall balance of £0.155m. However, to charge these repairs to the Common Good fund would result in a considerable depletion of funds available to meet other commitments for the Common Good that may arise. The 10-year General Services capital programme approved by the Council on 30 January 2013 included £0.100m per annum for restoration and repairs to castles and historic monuments within North Ayrshire. The report proposed that the costs of Kerelaw Castle are met from this budget in 2013/14.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the remedial work to Kerelaw Castle, which is owed by Stevenston Common Good, to be funded from General Fund capital budget allocated for the purpose of safeguarding North Ayrshire's heritage.

13. Free Summer Swimming in North Ayrshire for Under 18s

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) on a pilot programme of free summer holiday swimming for 0-18 years olds in North Ayrshire.

The report proposed offering free summer swimming on the mainland during the summer holiday period (29 June – 18 August 2013) to children aged 5-7 (accompanied by a paying adult) and those aged 8-18 (without the requirement for adult supervision). Children aged 0-4 already receive free swimming all year from K:A Leisure.

The Council currently provides a subsidy of £40,000 p.a. to the Auchrannie Hotel to provide discounted swimming to young people who are resident on Arran. The report proposed that the Council and the Auchrannie Hotel incorporate within this subsidy an agreed timetable of free summer holiday swimming opportunities for young people resident on the island, at times to suit the Auchrannie's obligations to members and residents.

Arrangements for monitoring usage and for the marketing and promotion of the initiative, were set out within Section 3 of the report.

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

- the importance of monitoring both uptake and also those who do not make use of the free provision; and
- the operation of the National Entitlement Card scheme, which is applicable to young people aged 11-18 only.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) approve the pilot programme of free summer holiday swimming for 0-18 years olds in North Ayrshire; and (b) receive a future report to review progress.

14. The Commonwealth Fencing Championships 2014

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) on proposed assistance to Scottish Fencing to bring the Commonwealth Fencing Championships to the sportscotland National Sports Centre in Largs in November 2014.

The report proposed that the Council support the hosting of the Commonwealth Fencing Championships at Largs in 2014 via the following actions:-

- the creation of a "shadow committee" in North Ayrshire to ensure that appropriate high quality support is provided to the event organisers from a range of North Ayrshire Council departments and to ensure that maximum spend is retained within North Ayrshire;
- promotion of, and support, for accommodation, tourism and food related opportunities to the event organisers;
- the establishment of "in-kind" partnerships with local schools, Active Schools and community sports clubs to design and ensure uptake of a range of volunteering opportunities in relation to the championships;
- support "in kind" from North Ayrshire Council sports development staff and K:A Leisure staff and facilities in support of the event; and
- a contribution of £20,000 from Economic Development, in relation to event set up costs, marketing, and for an economic impact study to be carried out in December 2014.

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

- the extent to which the centre attracts other national events;
- the potential for partnership working between the centre and the Council for the creation of a community sports hub;
- the need to raise awareness about the Commonwealth Fencing Championships, including involving local businesses; and
- the importance of capitalising on the tourism and economic development opportunities arising from both the Scottish Sailing Centre and National Sports Centre in Largs.

The Cabinet agreed to support the Commonwealth Fencing Championships, as detailed within the report.

15. Revocation of the Closing Orders at 14, 24 and 28 Chaseley Gardens, Skelmorlie

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on the condition of the properties at 14, 24 and 28 Chaseley Gardens, Skelmorlie.

On 4 September 2012, the Cabinet approved the serving of Closing Orders over 3 properties at Chaseley Gardens, Skelmorlie, as they failed to meet a condition that was compliant with the recognised Tolerable Standard as defined in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006. Following a recent inspection, it has been established that the required reinstatement work is complete and the properties now comply with the definition of the Tolerable Standard.

The Cabinet agreed to revoke the Closing Orders in respect of 14, 24 and 28 Chaseley Gardens, Skelmorlie.

16. Affordable Housing Supply Programme: Revision

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services and Health) on the submission of the revised Strategic Local Programme (SLP) to the Scottish Government and for a number of specific actions to facilitate the delivery of the SLP.

The report provided details of proposed additions to the approved SLP and Slippage Programme, as a result of the additional £2.434m Resource Planning Assumptions (RPA) subsidy award. Having exhausted the opportunities within the existing slippage programme, a strategic review of other potential development opportunities identified the following proposals:-

- a regeneration project at Dickson Drive, Irvine, involving the demolition of 20 properties between 136-174 Dickson Drive and the construction of 8 new homes on the site, as well as the demolition of the flats above the shops on the site, while retaining the retail units;

- the phased demolition of current houses and bed-sits at Montgomery Court, Kilbirnie, and construction of a new development of 24 amenity houses;
- the demolition of 23 bed-sits and 2 two-apartment houses at Kiln Court, Kilbirnie, and the construction of a modern 16-unit sheltered housing complex with provision for a Social Services hub;
- an increase from £1.274m to £1.28m in the grant allocation for the John Galt Primary School development; and
- the allocation of £320,000 to Irvine Housing Association to part fund the purchase of second hand homes from the open market, with the remaining balance of £148,000 being used for the Council's Housing Services to purchase five second-hand homes.

In addition to the proposals for the SLP, the report proposed allocating £47,000 to Irvine Housing Association to support its successful bid to the Scottish Government for the Greener Homes Innovation Scheme for their Healthy Sustainable House Pilots.

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

- further detail on the costs associated with the Dickson Drive, Irvine project;
- the housing need and demand work to be carried out within Skelmorlie; and
- the Greener Homes Innovation Scheme.

In response to a question from Councillor McLean, the Divisional Manager (HQ) (Community Care and Housing) undertook to provide a further breakdown of the costs associated with the Dickson Drive, Irvine project.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) approve the submission of the revised SLP, as set out at Appendix 1, to the Scottish Government; and (b) actions to facilitate the delivery of the SLP, namely (i) the allocation of funding to CHA from the Affordable Housing Account to allow the Fairlie development to proceed; (ii) the cessation of allocations of properties at Dickson Drive with immediate effect and the commencement of decanting of existing tenants; (iii) the use of the Mortgage to Rent underspend from 2012/13 to part fund the Dickson Drive development; (iv) the commencement of the decanting of tenants at Kiln Court, Irvine; and (v) the allocation of Affordable Housing Account funds to Irvine Housing Association (IHA) to assist in the Greener Homes Pilot.

17. Hazeldene Horticulture Social Enterprise and Employment Project

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services and Health) on a partnership arrangement with ENABLE Scotland and support the development of a social enterprise and employment project within the grounds of Hazeldene Resource Centre, Kilwinning.

Hazeldene Resource Centre provides day services for adults with learning disabilities some of whom have complex needs. The report proposed entering into a Public Social Partnership (PSP) with ENABLE Scotland to develop Hazeldene Horticulture as a live and sustainable enterprise. Hazeldene Horticulture will be established and developed as a PSP 'pilot' offering employability and horticulture services involving North Ayrshire Council and ENABLE Scotland as key partners. A steering group will be established to provide strategic direction and specialist guidance. The strategic objectives for Hazeldene Horticulture were set out at Section 3.3 of the report.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the development and finalisation of a public social partnership social enterprise model with ENABLE Scotland within the grounds of Hazeldene Resource Centre, Kilwinning.

18. Response to the Proposed Closure of the Millport Marine Biological Station

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) on the Council's proposed response to the announcement by the University of London to end its provision of education and research services at the Millport Marine Biological Station.

In recognition of the impact the closure of the station would have on the island of Cumbrae, the report recognised the importance for the Council of directing a response to bring together relevant stakeholders and all potential funding sources. North Ayrshire Council and Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) have commissioned analysis of the commercial development potential of the facility, with the aim of producing a viable business plan to support the case for activity and employment in the long term, identifying capital and revenue funding requirements, and establishing a sustainable operational structure for the long term. A brief for this work was set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

The aspiration is that employment will be retained on site. However, it is considered that some reduction in economic activity and hence spend within the island economy is likely and, as a result, a wider response will be required. A Community Development Plan for Cumbrae, commissioned by the Cumbrae Community Development Committee in 2009, involved extensive consultation and an economic overview of the island, and set out a number of recommendations on how to bring together community development activities in a more coordinated way. The Development Plan remains relevant and the main components requiring to be analysed were set out at Section 3.6 of the report.

At the Chair's invitation, the Cabinet heard from Councillors Gallagher and Marshall on the closure of the facility and on a meeting being facilitated by Michael Russell MSP to discuss the matter on the island. Councillor Hill, also a local Elected Member for North Coast and Cumbraes, advised of the provision of a Members briefing immediately following the Cabinet.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the proposed response to the loss of education and research services at the Millport Marine Biological Station, as set out in the report.

19. Youth Employment Scotland (Employer Recruitment Incentive)

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) in respect the proposed submission of a bid to the Youth Employment Scotland (Employment Recruitment Incentive) on a pan Ayrshire basis led by North Ayrshire Council.

The Scottish Government has announced the creation of a new £25 million scheme to create 10,000 new jobs for young people in small to medium enterprises (SMEs) across Scotland. This is part of the Government's Youth Employment Scotland (YES) programme which aims to prepare and support young people into employment. £10 million is available through the European Social Fund (ESF) matched by £15 million of Scottish Government funding.

The stage 1 proposal set out at Appendix 1 was submitted on 15 April 2013. The report proposed the submission of a full application for funding to the Youth Employment Scotland (Employment Recruitment Incentive) on a pan Ayrshire basis, led by North Ayrshire Council. As lead applicant, North Ayrshire Council will be responsible for the overall delivery and financial management of the programme. Each area would, however, deliver the programme in accordance with its own priorities using its own delivery models. Section 3.3 of the report detailed the number of places to be created in each of the 3 Ayrshire areas, together with the associated costs. If the bid is successful, a formal three way agreement would be drafted between the three Councils which will set out key responsibilities in delivering, monitoring and reporting for the programme.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the feasibility of filling the 500 Youth Employment programme places proposed for North Ayrshire.

The Cabinet agreed to the submission of a bid to the Youth Employment Scotland (Employment Recruitment Incentive) on a pan Ayrshire basis led by North Ayrshire Council.

20. North Ayrshire Employability and Skills Strategy and Activity

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) on the development of a new labour market strategy for North Ayrshire and a proposed review of Employability and Skills activity.

Current employability provision sits within an Employability and Skills Framework, which was developed to target resources across five distinct key stages providing tailored support for North Ayrshire residents regardless of the barriers they face. A copy of North Ayrshire's Framework was attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

Over the last two years, the Employability and Skills activity has supported over 4,000 beneficiaries with over 1,700 progressing into employment. Despite this support, and the more intensive support available from Jobcentre Plus, the Work Programme and other agencies, North Ayrshire's claimant count continues to be the highest in Scotland. Compounding this, the next few years are likely to herald a period of rapid change within employability services. It is, therefore, critical that the Council takes stock, reviews existing provision and develops a new labour market strategy which will take account of these changes and challenges facing the North Ayrshire labour market. Sections 3.2-3.4 of the report set out the terms and purpose of the proposed review, which is expected to commence in May 2013 for a 3-month period.

The Cabinet agreed to approve (a) the development of a new labour market strategy for North Ayrshire and (b) a review of Employment and Skills Activity.

21. Scotland's Climate Change Declaration

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) on progress against the commitments made in the Climate Change Declaration.

All 32 local authorities in Scotland have signed up to "Scotland's Climate Change Declaration". In essence, the Declaration acknowledges that local authorities accept that climate change is occurring and commits local authorities to both mitigate and adapt to climate change. The Scottish Government also introduced the Climate Change Act 2009, which includes a statutory target to reduce Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% from the 1990 baseline by 2050 and an interim target of 42% emissions reduction by 2020.

The Council has made progress in meeting its commitments in the Climate Change Declaration for 2012, as shown at Appendix 1 to the report. There will continue to be an annual statement monitoring progress on our climate change response. In addition, energy, sustainability and climate change are part of a comprehensive policy review within the Development and Environment directorate. As these policies and action plans are developed, further reports will be submitted to the Cabinet.

Noted.

22. Employee Engagement Survey

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on a six-monthly update on progress on Employee Engagement Survey improvement planning process.

In October 2012, the Cabinet acknowledged the results of the Employee Engagement Survey and approved the Council-wide Improvement Plan, which addressed the 8 employee experience factors highlighted in the survey results. By the end of October 2012, each Corporate Director and Head of Service had been issued with a pack of information in relation to the survey findings for their Service. It was recommended that Services organise focus groups with mixed representation across the Service to review the findings, identify where improvements could be made, and determine the Service Improvement Plan.

Updates on progress in terms of Service Improvement Plan actions will be obtained in June and September 2013 which will in turn provide further updates on the 'all Service' actions within the Council-wide Improvement Plan. Appendix 1 to the report provided an update on the Council-wide Improvement Plan actions. Key actions were identified at Section 2.12 of the report. Employees will be kept up to date with progress towards the Council-wide Improvement Plan actions, initially through articles on Navigate. A further update will be provided to the Cabinet in October 2013.

Noted.

23. Measured Term Contract 2012/15 - Heating, Mechanical and Ventilation Systems: Responsive Repairs and Maintenance

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on proposal to invite tenders for the procurement of a measured term contract for Heating, Mechanical and Ventilation Systems: Responsive Repairs and Maintenance.

Heating, Mechanical and Ventilation Systems Responsive Repairs and Maintenance is a statutory requirement for all of the Council's operational properties. The current contract expires on 1 December 2013 with no option to extend. The annual value of the contract is anticipated to be in the region of £150,000.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the tendering of the measured term contract for Responsive Repairs and Maintenance of Heating, Mechanical and Ventilation Systems, as detailed in this report.

24. Montgomerie Park: Landscape Management Services

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on proposal to invite tenders for Landscape Management Services at Montgomerie Park, Irvine.

The Council has a landscape management services contract with The Scottish Woodlands Trust and is required to have a new contract in place with effect from 1 October 2013. The contract will operate for five years, with no requirements for an option to extend the contract beyond the five year period. The estimated annual cost is £65,000 which equates to £325,000 over the five-year period of the contract.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the issue of a formal tender for Landscape Management Services at Montgomerie Park, Irvine.

25. Insurance Services

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on proposal to invite tenders for insurance services.

The Council has an insurance services contract with Zurich Insurance plc and it is proposed to have the new contract in place with effect from 1 April 2014. The contract will operate for 3 years under a Long Term Agreement, with the option to extend for up to 2 years. The estimated annual cost is £1,700,000, which equates to £5,100,000 over the initial period of contract, plus an additional £3,400,000 if the extension period is invoked.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the commencement of a formal tender exercise for insurance services.

26. North Ayrshire Community Based Addictions Support Services - Tender Outcome

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services and Health) on the results of the tender for North Ayrshire Community Based Addictions Support Services.

The proposed contract terms is for 1 year commencing on 1 July 2013 with the option to extend for a further two 12-month periods. Two bids were received in response to the requirement. These were analysed, further clarification obtained where required, and scores determined against previously published evaluation criteria and weightings. A Tender Outcome Report and award recommendation was provided in Appendix 1. The estimated total value of the overall contract (including any potential extensions) is £412,500.00.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the contract award for North Ayrshire Community Based Addictions Support Services to Momentum.

27. Minute of Ayrshire Economic Partnership: 13 February 2013

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) on the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2013.

Noted.

28. Corporate Equality Group: Minutes of 21 February 2013

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the Minutes of the Corporate Equality Group held on 21 February 2013.

Noted.

29. Community Empowerment Policy Board: Minutes of 4 March 2013

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) on the Minutes of the Community Empowerment Policy Board held on 4 March 2013.

Noted.

30. Education Attainment and Achievement Policy Board: Minutes of 11 March 2013

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) on the Minutes of the Education Attainment and Achievement Policy Board held on 11 March 2013.

Noted.

31. Economy and Employment Policy Board: Minutes of 18 March 2013

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) on the Minutes of the Board held on 18 March 2013.

Noted.

32. Environment and Infrastructure and Economy and Employment Joint Policy Board of 18 March 2013

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) on the Minute of the Meeting of the Environment and Infrastructure and Economy and Employment Joint Policy Board held on 18 March 2013.

Noted.

33. Health and Social Care Policy Board: Minutes of 25 March 2013

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services and Health) on the Minutes of the Health and Social Care Policy Board held on 25 March 2013.

Noted.

34. North Ayrshire Housing Partnership: Minutes of Meeting 26 March 2013

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services and Health) on the Minutes of the meeting of the North Ayrshire Housing Partnership held on 26 March 2013.

Noted.

35. Finance and Corporate Support Policy Board Minutes of 28 March 2013

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on the Minutes of the Finance and Corporate Support Policy Board held on 28 March 2013.

Noted.

The meeting ended at 5.20 p.m.