

Corporate Services Committee
3 December 2002

IRVINE, 3 December 2002 - At a Meeting of the Corporate Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

David Munn, Robert Reilly, Jane Gorman, Elisabeth Marshall, Elizabeth McLardy, Alan Munro, David O' Neill, Donald Reid, Robert Rae and Samuel Taylor.

In Attendance

B Devine, Chief Executive; B MacDonald, Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion); A Herbert, Assistant Chief Executive (Finance); M Macfarlane, Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel); J Barrett, Assistant Chief Executive (Information Technology); K Thomas, Manager Protective Services (Legal and Protective); S Bale and A Sobieraj, Corporate and Democratic Support Officers and J Stevenson, Communications Officer (Chief Executive's).

Chair

Councillor Munn in the Chair

Apologies for Absence

Samuel Gooding, Jack Carson and Ian Clarkson.

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 October 2002, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Revenue Budget 2002/2003: Budgetary Control

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) on the budgetary control position for Corporate Services at the end of October 2002 and projections for the financial year 2002/2003.

Noted.

3. Achieving e-government: Progress Report

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Information Technology) on progress in implementing the Council's e-government Action Plan.

On 11 June 2002 the Committee noted a revised Action Plan focussing on 7 key projects over the next few years. Progress on these is as follows:-

- the first phase of the implementation of proposals for a Telephone Contact Centre involving Council Tax, Hall Lets and Cleansing Services is scheduled to commence in June 2003;

- the preparation will be undertaken for the development of Council Contact Centres (One-Stop Shops) over the period 2003-2007 ;
- the development of the Council website is continuing including the completion of the Frequently Asked Questions database;
- e-Community - the Council is a funding partner in the Ayrshire Electronic Community (AEC), which aims to increase public access to computers, the internet and new technology;
- the Information Management Action Plan includes the completion of a technical evaluation of Touch Screen Kiosks and proposals for a 3 month trial at Bridgegate House, Irvine and the Isle of Arran Local Office;
- e-Democracy - the second phase of the IT project for elected Members has commenced with the majority of Members provided with ICT equipment, training and support ; and
- upgrading of the Council's major business applications is taking place in accordance with Government's IT technical standards.

Noted.

4. Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Strategy Progress Report

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Information Technology) on progress in the implementation of the Council's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Strategy which includes:-.

- the use of the new Authorities Buying Consortium (ABC) Framework Agreement and competition between the 2 PC suppliers which has reduced the cost of basic PCs from £711 last year to £510;
- the Acceptable Computer Usage Policy received Committee approval in March 2002;
- the installation of new anti-virus protection software;
- increases in staff users of the intranet from 1,800 to 2,500 and of the internet from 400 to over 700; and
- an increase in use of the Council website from 2,500 visitors per month to over 6,000 per month.

Noted.

5. The North Ayrshire and Isle of Arran Replacement Local Plans

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on the North Ayrshire and the Isle of Arran Replacement Local Plans and seeking approval to proceed to consultation on the Finalised Plans.

Considerable consultation has been undertaken with elected Members, a wide range of organisations, statutory bodies and local communities throughout the development of the Plans. National and local Structure Plan policies have also been taken into account. The consultative draft Local Plans were produced in December 2001 and aimed to balance sustaining existing settlements and supporting social justice.

Members seminars were held on 20 February 2001 and 18 September and 8 October 2002 and their observations were considered in the preparation of the Local Plans. Particular concerns of Members on the North Ayrshire Plan were as follows:-

(a) that a housing needs reassessment takes place to ensure the most up to date housing needs and land supply information was contained in the Finalised Plan. This has now been completed with the housing needs figure derived from population projections provided by the General Register Office (Scotland) for the year 2000 and household projections provided by the Scottish Executive for 2002. The assessment and appropriate allocations were detailed in Appendix 1 to the report;

(b) that there should be affordable housing in the North Coast. The Housing Plan and the strategic agreement with Communities Scotland recognise the need for social rented housing for various needs groups and subsidised private sector housing. The only change requested by Housing Services is the reserve of the former nursery site at Moorburn, Largs as a site for special needs housing; and

(c) that concerns in terms of market led housing land release, which would require further greenfield land release to provide for high value housing in the North Coast should be examined further, albeit differing views were expressed by Members on this issue. Further examination of the land supply has confirmed there is a sufficient choice of sites to provide for an increased number of high value houses.

2 Options were presented for consideration in relation to the North Ayrshire Plan as follows:-

(i) Option 1 proposed the endorsement of the North Ayrshire Local Plan to proceed to the Finalised Plan, in conjunction with the Isle of Arran Plan, and that the North Ayrshire Plan contain no expressed additional greenfield allocation for high value housing, acknowledging that windfall sites and sites from the effective and established land supply in the North Coast can come forward to meet market demand. This would allow both Plans to be issued for consultation in 2003 and with minimal delay; and

(ii) Option 2 to incorporate additional greenfield allocations to provide high value housing in the North Coast, would require a change to the North Ayrshire Local Plan and the issue of a second consultative draft. Such action would necessitate the release of large sites with consequent adjustments to housing land supply in other community areas to maintain balance at Council area level. There would be significant staffing and financial implications in the revision of the consultative draft for consultation in Spring 2003, adding approximately 1 year to the process. A large number of objections are anticipated to any changes.

The Committee agreed to approve (a) the reports on public participation prepared in response to the matters raised in the consultative draft Local Plans in December 2001; (b) the agreed changes to be incorporated in the North Ayrshire and Isle of Arran Finalised Plans as detailed in the report; (c) Option 1 as detailed in the report, which ensures no further changes to the Finalised Local Plans, with the exception of the release of 35 units at the former Skelmorlie Reservoir and 15 units at Golf Road, Millport, Isle of Cumbrae within the North Ayrshire Local Plan; and (d) proceeding to consultation on the North Ayrshire and Isle of Arran Finalised Local Plans.

6. The Future Development of Air Transport in the UK: Scotland

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on the Department of Transport consultation on the Future Development of Air Transport in the UK which sets out a range of options for the future development of air services and airports over the next 30 years.

The consultation recognises increasing demand for air travel, and the significant contribution by airports and air services on the economic and social welfare of the UK. The three Ayrshire authorities are concerned that the existing valuable contribution and potential for the expansion of Prestwick Airport is not fully recognised in the consultation and that greater emphasis has been placed on expansion at Glasgow and Edinburgh Airports. Further development around Prestwick Airport is seen as an integral part of the economic regeneration strategies pursued by the Ayrshire local authorities.

The Council's response has been submitted to the Scottish Executive in order to meet the deadline and refers to the advantages of the full length primary runway and the secondary runway at Prestwick Airport and the airport's available terminal capacity, surface transport access to Glasgow City Centre by rail and road, benefits to the Ayrshire economy, regional development opportunities, and that Prestwick Airport is ideally placed to accommodate additional traffic with minimal impact on local communities and the environment in contrast with Glasgow and Edinburgh Airports.

The Committee agreed to approve the response by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) as submitted to the Scottish Executive on behalf of the Council.

7. Land at Sanderson Avenue, Irvine

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on the disposal of an area of land at Sanderson Avenue, Irvine.

On 27 November 2001 the Property Services Committee agreed a joint venture between the Council and Irvine Housing Association to redevelop, for residential purposes, land extending to approximately 1.22 hectares at Sanderson Avenue, Irvine. The Council will arrange demolition and site clearance of the existing housing stock.

Irvine Housing Association now intends to acquire the site and submit an application for planning permission. Provisional agreement has been reached with the Housing Association to transfer the land at a price of £150,000 together with payment of the Council's reasonable legal and estates costs.

The Committee agreed to approve the disposal of land at Sanderson Avenue, Irvine to Irvine Housing Association in the sum of £150,000.

8. Food Enforcement Service Plan 2002/2003

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Protective) on the Food Enforcement Service Plan for 2002/2003 as required by the Food Standards Agency.

The Government's White Paper "The Food Standards Agency - a Force for Change" identified the Food Standards Agency's key role in overseeing local authority food enforcement activities. Local authority Food Enforcement Service Plans are annually monitored and audited by the Agency as part of this process.

The Service Plan for 2002/2003 includes:-

- carrying out a risk based inspection and sampling programme covering all food businesses for food safety and food standards within the Council area, in line with documented procedures, relevant legislation, Codes of Practice and Guidance Notes;
- links to the Council's corporate objectives and planning process, in particular Best Value;
- service delivery in terms of food premises inspection including the documentation of inspection programmes for food hygiene and food standards;
- advice to business including the provision of food hygiene training free of charge; and
- control and investigation of outbreaks and food related infectious disease.

The Committee agreed to approve the Food Enforcement Service Plan 2002/2003 as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

9. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) National Performance Framework for Trading Standards - Community Trading Standards Service Delivery Plan 2002/2003

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Protective) on a Community Trading Standards Service Delivery Plan for 2002/2003 as required by the National Performance Framework for Trading Standards issued by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

The Council's Community Trading Standards Service Delivery Plan for 2002/2003 details:-

- the core responsibilities for the Trading Standards service, including visits to commercial premises to check compliance with statutory requirements and to give compliance advice;
- information on how the Trading Standards service meets community and Council corporate objectives;
- the needs and expectations of both consumers and businesses;
- the demand on the Trading Standards service by national and local policies; and
- information on how the service can improve to become more efficient and effective in terms of Best Value.

The Committee agreed to approve the Community Trading Standards Service Delivery Plan for 2002/2003 as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

10. Scottish Social Services Council - Codes of Practice for Employers of Social Service Workers and Social Service Workers

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) on the new Codes of Practice for Employers of Social Service Workers and for Social Service Workers.

The Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 established the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), which has a general duty to promote high standards of conduct and practice among social service workers and in their education and training. Under Section 53(4) of the Act employers of social service workers must take into account any Codes of Practice published by the SSSC. The Codes of Practice confer a legal duty on Councils to comply with the appropriate standards detailed in the Codes. An employer's breach of the Code can result in the cancellation of its registration for the provision of social services.

The Council's Personnel Policies and Procedures address, to a large extent, the standards expected of employers and employees in the regulation of social service workers. There are a number of specific key personnel related aspects of the Codes, however, which require to be addressed, including:-

(a) that all Social Service staff are aware of and understand their responsibilities in relation to the Codes; and

(b) that the Council as employer complies and takes the necessary action following any breach by employees.

The Committee agreed (i) that the Council adopt the Codes of Practice for social service workers and employers of social service workers into its Personnel Policies and Procedures; and (ii) that the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) undertake an audit, in collaboration with Social Services, to identify gaps in the Council's Policies and Procedures and, if appropriate, to submit these to Committee for consideration.

11. Employment Act 2002

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) on the content and implications of the Employment Act 2002, which contains provisions, covering individual employment protection and collective rights in the workplace, tribunal reform, conciliation and dispute resolution. The Act will be implemented on a phased basis throughout 2003.

The legislation will have implications for Council policies and practices in the management of staff, including the following:-

- (a) Fixed Term Regulations implemented on 1 October 2002 relating to the review of temporary/fixed term/casual employment contracts;
- (b) Maternity, Paternity, Adoption Pay and Leave changes implemented on 1 April 2003 which will require incorporation into the Council's Terms and Conditions of Employment; and
- (c) Dispute resolution changes including statutory procedures covering discipline and dismissal (DDPs) implemented late 2003 which will require a review of procedures.

It is proposed (i) that a Working Group be established, chaired by Personnel, with representation from all Council services, to consider the detail, implications and implementation of the Act; (ii) that the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) present to the Committee, as appropriate, specific proposals on changes to Council policies and procedures; (iii) that briefings for managers on the Act's provisions be arranged; and (iv) that those provisions relating to maternity, paternity and adoption be incorporated into the Council's Terms and Conditions of Employment.

The Committee agreed to approve (a) the action proposed to implement arrangements contained in the Employment Act 2002; and (b) the appropriate amendments to the Council's Terms and Conditions of Employment.

12. Corporate Services 1st Tier Joint Consultative Committee (Local Government Employees and Craft Operatives)

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS1), being the Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Services 1st Tier Joint Consultative Committee (Local Government Employees and Craft Operatives) held on 23 October 2002.

Noted.

13. Corporate Services (Conditions of Service) Sub Committee

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS2), being the Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Services (Conditions of Service) Sub Committee held on 28 November 2002.

Noted.

The meeting ended at 2.40 p.m.

Corporate Services Committee
03/12/2002

Appendix No
CS1

1st Tier Joint Consultative Committee
(Local Government Employees and Craft Operatives)
23 October 2002

IRVINE, 23 October 2002 - At a Meeting of the 1st Tier Joint Consultative Committee (Local Government Employees and Craft Operatives) of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Representing North Ayrshire Council - David Munn, Tom Barr, Peter McNamara, Alan Munro and David O'Neill.

Representing UNISON - Stephanie Herd, Ian Wallace, Allison McGookin, Tom Parish, Colin Turbett and Pam Crosthwaite.

Representing GMB - George McLaughlan, Alex Smith, Paul Houston and Frank Minnery.

Representing T&GWU - Sam Tremble, Sean O'Reilly and Harry O'Neill.

In Attendance

T Orr, Corporate Director (Property Services); M Macfarlane, Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) and S Ferguson, Principal Personnel Officer (Personnel); and S Bale and A Sobieraj, Corporate and Democratic Support Officers (Chief Executive's).

Chair

Councillor Munn in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Jimmy Nicholls, UNISON and Alan Houlison, T&GWU.

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 April 2002 were confirmed, subject to the addition of Tom Parish on the sederunt.

2. Employee Absence Statistics

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) on the current absence levels within the Council.

The Corporate Services Committee approved the Council's new Procedures for Managing Sickness Absence and Dealing with Incapability on 30 April 2002 and these came into force on 1 July 2002. The Procedure for Dealing with Incapability will now assist the Council in its approach to managing absence.

The report sets out the 2001/2002 Council performance in relation to the Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) on the management of sickness absence. Information was provided on the Council's performance for previous years, the 2000/2001 Scottish average figures (2001/2002 information was not yet available) and the statistics for the first quarter of the financial year 2002/2003.

During 2001/2002 sickness absence levels reduced for Chief Officers, APT&C employees and teachers. These increased marginally however for former craft and manual employees although, overall, there has been a slight year to year improvement in absence levels within the Council.

To assist the process of effecting improvements in absence levels and to reinforce the need to manage absence, the Committee was advised that the Council's Absence Management, Discipline and Incapability Procedures were revised earlier this year and were agreed, following consultation with the Trades Unions. The new Procedures have now been introduced into the Council's workplaces, following the roll out of absence management training programmes to all Council Managers. Nominated shop stewards were also included in the training programme roll out.

The Committee was advised that improvements in absence levels were anticipated as an outcome. The Trades Unions were encouraged to work in partnership with the Council in supporting their members to attend their place of work.

Mr Frank Minnery, GMB, raised the issue that the Council's new Procedures were being inconsistently applied by service managers. The Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) advised the meeting that this issue had not been raised with him prior to the meeting, nor was he aware that the Trades Unions had any concerns in relation to this matter. The Trades Unions were invited to further pursue the matter with the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel), giving specific examples of the lack of consistency and areas of concern.

Noted.

3. Best Value Update

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) on the current position in relation to the Best Value agenda within the Council.

The Council has demonstrated its commitment to Best Value, which includes Strategic Service Reviews across Council services, which are supported by an annual programme of Efficiency Reviews.

Details of scoping papers and Executive summaries for current Strategic Service Reviews, information on the progress of Efficiency Reviews and on further Strategic Service Reviews planned in the near future was provided. Performance reporting in relation to Statutory Performance Indicators has been published on the Council's website.

The Committee was advised that the Local Government in Scotland Bill will become law in 2003 and contains proposals for legislating for the Best Value process. The Corporate Policy Committee approved the Council's response to proposals on 5 February 2002 and this was attached for information. In addition, the detailed response, which was submitted to the Scottish Executive on 10 July 2002, was enclosed.

The Trades Union representatives raised the matter of information being provided to them on the Strategic Service and Efficiency Reviews and referred in particular to lack of information on the implementation of the Community Facilities Review.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) confirmed the process involved in the Strategic Service and Efficiency Reviews and indicated that Trades Unions would be informed of progress, as appropriate, for dissemination to relevant staff. The Trades Unions were advised that any issues of detail arising out of reviews should be raised with the relevant service of the Council through the 2nd Tier Joint Consultative Committees.

Noted.

4. Joint Futures Update

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) on the meeting of the North Ayrshire Local Partnership Agreement Joint Staff Forum held on 16 September 2002.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) indicated the background to the Joint Future Initiatives between the Council and NHS Ayrshire and Arran. Joint Future aims to develop joined up delivery of health and associated local authority services in Ayrshire and Arran. This includes working in partnership, utilising expertise within each organisation and pooling budgets.

The Council has established a Local Partnership Agreement with Health services for Older People's services and the proposals have been approved by the Scottish Executive. The provisions of the Agreement include the establishment of the North Ayrshire Local Partnership Joint Staff Forum. The minutes of the Forum's inaugural meeting were submitted for information and it was confirmed that all subsequent Forum minutes will be issued to this Committee.

The Trades Union representatives welcomed the partnership arrangements with NHS Ayrshire and Arran and in particular the pooling of expertise and financial resources. The Trades Unions expressed the view, however, that the Conditions of Service of Council employees must be safeguarded during this process of change.

Noted.

5. Work Life Balance Update

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) on the current position in relation to the Work Life Balance Project within the Council.

Work Life Balance is a business principle, which recognises the role of individuals in the success of an organisation. Forthcoming legislation will encourage employers to operate flexible working practices to enable staff to balance home and working life.

£45,000 has been received from the Department of Trade and Industry's Challenge Fund for the year 2002/2003 to develop Work Life Initiatives within the Council. Consultants have been commissioned to assess opportunities and develop these initiatives, which will assist in addressing absenteeism, staff recruitment and staff motivation.

Since September 2002 the Council has undertaken the following:-

- Established a business case for Work Life Balance;
- Delivered presentations and communicated with elected Members, senior management and Trades Unions;
- Compiled relevant data for the Department of Trade and Industry;
- Held a Work Life Balance Seminar on 11 September 2002 in partnership with the Trades Unions;
- Identified four main areas for pilot projects, which were Social Services, Information Technology, Finance and Building Services. Focus Groups were conducted within these services; and
- Agreed pilot projects relating to home working and compressed hours.

Nominations are invited from each of the four pilot areas and Trades Unions to form a Steering Group to take the project forward.

Noted.

6. Health and Safety Issues

6.1 Employee Accident Statistics: Monitoring Report

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) on employee injury accident statistics.

The report provided a summary of those injury accidents for the period 1 July to 30 September 2002, which required to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive in accordance with the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995.

Noted.

7. Any Other Competent Business

7.1 Possible Fire Brigade Industrial Action

The Corporate Director (Property Services) provided details of the Council's preparations for the Fire Brigade industrial action should this industrial action take place commencing on Tuesday 29 October 2002.

Comprehensive information was provided on preparations for emergency cover during the industrial action, which would be reviewed on a regular basis. Council employees and Trades Unions would be notified as soon as all preparatory details were finalised.

Noted.

The meeting ended at 3.15 p.m.

**Corporate Services Committee
03/12/2002**

Appendix No
CS2

**Conditions of Service Sub Committee
28 November 2002**

IRVINE, 28 November 2002 - At a Meeting of the Corporate Services (Conditions of Service) Sub Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 11.00 a.m.

Present

David Munn, Thomas Barr, Peter McNamara, Alan Munro and David O'Neill.

In Attendance

A. Herbert, Assistant Chief Executive (Finance); M. Macfarlane, Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel); I. MacKay, Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Protective); B. Gardner, Head of Educational Resources (Educational Services); and M. Adams, Corporate and Democratic Support Officer (Chief Executive's).

1. Exclusion of the Public

The Sub Committee 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 1 of Part I of Schedule 7A of the Act.

2. Educational Services - Request for Voluntary Severance

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) seeking approval of a request for early retirement from an employee within Educational Services. The report indicated the implications for the Council should the request be approved.

The Sub Committee agreed to approve the request for early retirement in the interests of the efficiency of the service, on the terms and conditions as detailed in the report.

3. Legal and Protective Services - Request for Voluntary Severance

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) seeking approval of a request for early retirement from an employee within Legal and Protective Services. The report indicated the implications for the Council should the request be approved.

The Sub Committee agreed to approve the request for early retirement in the interests of the efficiency of the service, on the terms and conditions as detailed in the report.

The meeting ended at 11.10 p.m.