

Cabinet  
28 May 2013

**Kilbirnie, 28 May 2013** - At a Meeting of the Cabinet of North Ayrshire Council at 2.30 p.m. in Bridgend Community Centre, Kilbirnie.

**Present**

Willie Gibson, John Bruce, Marie Burns, Tony Gurney and Alex Mclean.

**In Attendance**

L. Friel, Corporate Director, Y. Baulk, Head of Finance and Property, S. Humphries, Chief Revenues and Benefits Officer, P. Doak, Senior Manager (Internal Audit and Risk Management) and D. Tate, Senior Manager (Housing, Assets & Investments) (Finance and Corporate Support); A. Sutton, Head of Service (Community and Culture) (Education and Skills); K. Dyson, Communications Officer and M. McKeown, Committee & Member Services Manager (Democratic and Administration Services) (Chief Executive's Service).

**Chair**

Councillor Gibson in the Chair.

**Apologies for Absence**

Alan Hill and Anthea Dickson.

**1. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest by Members in terms of Standing Order 16 and Section 5 of the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

**2. Minutes**

The accuracy of the Minutes of the previous Ordinary and Special meetings of the Cabinet, both held on 14 May 2013, was agreed and the Minutes signed in accordance with paragraph 7(1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

**3. Welfare Reform Action Plan 2013/14 & Baseline Indicators**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) which (a) provided an update on the progress made by the Council's Welfare Reform Working Group to progress the Council's 2012/13 Welfare Reform Action Plan; (b) set out planned action and activity to respond to the four major welfare reforms that will be implemented in 2013/14 (i.e. Benefit Cap, Personal Independence Allowance, Universal Credit, and Single Fraud Investigation Service); and (c) provided information on key baseline indicators that have been compiled to measure and track the reforms and the identify any trends that are emerging.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) approve the Welfare Reform Action Plan 2013/14 and the baseline indicators, as set out at Appendices 1 and 2 to the report; and (b) receive quarterly updates on progress at future meetings.

#### **4. Write Off Irrecoverable and Non-Recoverable Housing Benefit Overpayments 2012-13**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) which (a) provided information on balances written off under delegated powers during 2012-13; and (b) sought approval to write off non-recoverable and irrecoverable Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit overpayments in excess of £1,000.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) note the sums written off under delegated powers; and (b) approve the write off of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit overpayments in excess of £1,000, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

#### **5. Council Tax (Variation for Unoccupied Dwellings) (Scotland) Regulations 2013**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) which (a) provided information on the provisions of the Council Tax (Variation for Unoccupied Dwellings) (Scotland) Regulations 2013; and (b) made proposals in respect of the application in North Ayrshire of the discretionary powers introduced by the Regulations which aim to provide the Council with increased discretionary powers and flexibility to encourage owners of empty homes to bring them back into use.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) note the new discretionary powers available under the Council Tax (Variation for Unoccupied Dwellings) (Scotland) Regulations 2013; (b) approve the continuation of current practice by exercising its discretion under the 2013 Regulations to reduce the 50% discount to 10% for both second homes and unoccupied properties across the whole of the Council area, and (c) defer any decision on using the new powers until the strategy being developed by the Housing Services Development Strategy Team to encourage empty properties back into use has been operational for a minimum period of 6 months, and pending a further report to Cabinet on the outcomes achieved.

#### **6. Kilwinning Academy: James Watt College Land Transfer**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) which (a) provided the Cabinet with an update on the proposed transfer a portion of land behind Kilwinning Academy to James Watt College to facilitate an extension to the College campus; and (b) sought approval of Cabinet to agree a three year extension to the long stop date for the purification of missives.

The Cabinet was advised that in relation to the extension of long stop date, that this had been concluded by the Council's Legal Services Section under delegated authority.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) note the position to date; and (b) endorse the action taken by Officers to extend the long stop date for the purification of missives.

## **7. Governance Arrangements for Major Capital Projects**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) which (a) provided information on the Council's approach to investing in its asset portfolio, including the ten year investment plan approved by Council in January 2013; and (b) presented and sought approval of proposed enhanced governance arrangements for major capital projects, to include Elected Member input, as detailed in the appendices 1 and 2 of the report.

Members asked questions and received clarification in respect of the proposals contained in the report.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) approve the project governance arrangements for major capital projects as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report; (b) approve the amended governance arrangements for the Garnock Campus project as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report; and (c) note the Council's involvement in the Scottish Future's Trust schools collaboration approach.

## **8. Creative Scotland: Investment Award to North Ayrshire Council**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) which (a) sought the approval of the Cabinet to accept the offer of an investment award of £200,000 from Creative Scotland's Place Programme to help the Council to progress its arts and culture action plan; and b) provided information on the work that will be taken forward with Creative Scotland to develop the action plan to progress a number of arts and cultural priorities.

Members asked questions and received clarification in respect of the proposals contained in the report, including issues around the provision of opportunities for older teenagers to showcase their talents.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) approve acceptance of the award; and (b) receive a progress report from the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) at a future meeting.

## **9. Gaelic Language Plan**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) which (a) outlined the statutory requirement on local authorities in terms of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 to produce a Gaelic Language Plan; and (b) detailed the Council's existing approach to supporting the Gaelic language; and (c) set out proposals to establish a Gaelic Language Plan Working Group, to include input from Elected Members and Officers, to develop a Gaelic Language Plan, in partnership with other bodies as appropriate.

The Cabinet asked questions and received clarification in respect of the proposals set out in the report.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) approve the proposals set out in the report and instruct Officers to prepare a draft Gaelic Language Plan for consultation; and (b) receive a further report on progress at a future meeting of the Cabinet, including a report on the success, or otherwise, of any collaborative arrangements with other agencies.

#### **10. Surplus Property - Land at James Crescent Irvine**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) on the proposed disposal of land at James Crescent, Irvine.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the disposal of land at James Crescent, Irvine, for the sum of £102,345, as set out in the report.

#### **11. Risk Management Annual Report 2012/13**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) which (a) updated the Cabinet on the scope of work carried out across the Council in relation to risk management during 2012/13 and on actions arising from this work; and (b) set out proposed areas for development in 2013/14.

The Cabinet agreed to note (a) the content of the Annual Report, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report and (b) progress being made in developing the Council's approach to risk management.

#### **12. 2012/13 Housing Revenue Account (HRA): Major Capital and Revenue Investment Programme**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) which provided the Cabinet with an update on (a) the major capital and revenue investment made within the Council's housing stock during the financial year 2012/13; and (b) the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) attainment level achieved as at 31 March 2013.

Members asked questions and received clarification in respect of the statistical information presented in relation to the SHQS attainment.

The Cabinet agreed to note delivery of the major capital and revenue investment programme during 2012/13 and progress being made towards achieving SHQS by April 2015.

**13. Finance and Corporate Support Policy Board: Minutes of Meeting held on 1 May 2013**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on the Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance and Corporate Support Policy Board held on 1 May 2013.

Noted.

**14. Corporate Health and Safety Group: Minutes of Meeting held on 3 May 2013**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Health and Safety Group held on 3 May 2013.

Noted.

The meeting ended at 3.50 p.m.