

Community and Recreational Services Committee
24 November 1998

Irvine, 24 November 1998 - At a Meeting of the Community and Recreational Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Stewart Dewar, Jane Gorman, James Clements, John Donn, James Jennings, Elizabeth McLardy, Peter McNamara, Margaret Munn, Robert Reilly and George Steven.

In Attendance

The Corporate Director (Educational Services); D Anderson, Head of Cultural and Community Services and F Keddily, Head of Sports and Recreational Services (Educational Services); T Baulk, Accountant (Financial Services); and M McKeown, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

Chair

Mr. Dewar in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

John Sillars.

1. Minutes Confirmed

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 13 October 1998, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Leisure Centres: Programme

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) which detailed the programme of activities planned for the Magnum, Auchendarvie, and Vikingar! Centres, and the Garnock Swimming Pool in the coming months and highlighted the impact of planned closures.

The Committee approved the programme as detailed in the report.

3. Seasonal Facilities: 1998 Operational Review

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the outcome of the operational review of Seasonal Facilities externalised in 1998.

In December 1997 the Committee agreed a proposal to externalise the operation of seasonal facilities during 1998. The externalisation of these facilities commenced in April 1998 and ran until 31 October 1998. Of the 17 facilities owned by the Council, 10 were awarded licences, whilst

the remainder were effectively closed and not available for public use.

The externalisation of facilities was designed to secure a nett financial saving to the Council whilst protecting levels of service and the opportunity for public access. The first year of the Scheme has proven to be very successful in terms of the uptake of seasonal licences, financial savings and service provision. A number of issues, however, have arisen from the externalisation process as undernoted:-

a) Glebelands, Saltcoats

Although no licence was issued for the operation of the Glebelands Bowling and Tennis site at Saltcoats, the Council is in negotiation with the Saltcoats Bowling Club to establish a method of operation for 1999.

b) South Beach, Ardrossan

The operator of the 1998 Seasonal Licence has submitted a proposal to lease or purchase the area for the development of an extended facility which would significantly develop the provision at the site and would require an extension to the existing area used.

c) Kilbirnie Tennis Courts

The Council has received a request from the Kilbirnie Tennis Club to repair the sports pavilion at the Kilbirnie Tennis Courts and thereafter to lease or sell the site to the Club. It is unlikely that funding will be available to repair the property and that the Club could find the necessary resources to finance the repair.

d) Brodick Tennis Courts

A number of complaints were received regarding the poor condition of the Brodick Tennis Courts, Isle of Arran and while this was due in part to bad summer weather conditions, there are other specific difficulties. A report on this matter will be submitted to the next meeting of the North Coast and Arran Area Committee.

After discussion the Committee agreed that (a) seasonal licences be advertised for 1999 but that they be extended from one to three years; (b) remedial action be taken to secure Glebelands Bowling and Tennis, and that discussions continue with Saltcoats Bowling Club for the operation of the facility in 1999; (c) proposals for the development of South Beach, Ardrossan be refused; and (d) the request from Kilbirnie Tennis Club to lease or purchase the site at Kilbirnie be refused but may be reconsidered if the Club can access significant external funding.

4. Catering Services at the Magnum, Auchenhavie and Vikingar! Centres

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the future provision of catering services at the Magnum, Auchenhavie and Vikingar! Centres which is currently provided by the Council's In-House Catering DSO.

The provision of catering at these facilities was advertised for tender in late 1997 but, following interest from a number of companies, only one tender was received. After evaluation this was not accepted on the basis that it did not represent good value and, as a result of this and the decision of the previous service providers to terminate their contract on 31 March 1998, the Council's In-House Catering DSO was authorised to provide a catering service pending further consideration of future provision. The cost of service delivery is still being assessed and it is anticipated that there will be a shortfall in income of around £35,000.

In keeping with the Best Value Regime, the Council has adopted an Implementation Plan which includes a programme of Service Reviews. Consideration is currently being given to the formation of a Leisure Trust for the operation of leisure facilities and a report will be submitted to the Committee in due course. Benefits may exist in considering future catering provision in line with the options for the operation of leisure facilities through a Trust, and it was proposed that no further action be taken regarding the contractual arrangements for catering at Leisure Centres at this time.

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of Catering Services at the Council's Leisure Centres pending investigations into the formation of a Trust and the operation of leisure facilities.

5. Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the requisition payable towards the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park budget for 1999/2000.

Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park is run by a Joint Management Committee which consists of elected members from North Ayrshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde Councils. Each Council contributes a grant towards the operation of the park which is also assisted by Scottish Natural Heritage.

The Joint Management Committee has now established its budget for 1999/2000 and, taking into account the financial position of contributing Councils, has approved a standstill budget which will result in a nett contribution of £63,400 from North Ayrshire Council - the same level as applied in 1997/98 and 1998/99.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve in principle, the requisition in respect of the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park's Revenue budget; and (b) to refer the matter to the Corporate Strategy Committee for consideration in the 1999/2000 Revenue budget process.

6. HMI Report: Community Education in North Ayrshire

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the outcome of the inspection of Community Education in North Ayrshire carried out by HM Inspectors of Schools during April 1998.

The Inspection report, published in early November, is generally complementary towards the Service, but does make several recommendations relating to the establishment of effective routines for planning and monitoring; the introduction of quality assurance and monitoring; enhanced staff development; and the clarification of professional and administrative roles.

Educational Services will build upon the strengths identified in the HMI report by implementing a review of planning arrangements; by establishing a quality assurance scheme; by publishing standards for staff supervision and through the establishment of a two-year staff development plan; by reviewing the structure of Community Education within Educational Services; and through the production of a plan to build on the expertise of Community Education staff in terms of collaborative work.

The implementation of the HMI report will take place with full staff consultation and HM Inspectors will review progress on the Action Plan after one year and report.

The Committee agreed (a) to the proposals detailed in the Director's report to address the points raised by the Inspection; (b) that a copy of the HMI Report should be issued to all Members of the Council; and (c) that a report on the Government's recent announcement in relation to Community Education be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

7. Provision of Bar Services in Community Facilities

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the outcome of the Pilot Scheme for the provision of bar services in community facilities.

On 9 June 1998 the Committee approved the implementation of a Pilot Scheme for the provision of bar services within two contracts at (a) Ardrossan Civic Centre and Saltcoats Town Hall; and (b) the Volunteer Rooms and Woodlands Centre, Irvine. The offer of contract was subject to the licensee holding one licence only to ensure that there was no

breach of Licensing Board procedures and was in respect of Occasional Licences only as defined in Section 33 of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976.

By the closing date for tenders 10 publicans had expressed interest in receiving tender documents with seven bids subsequently being properly returned. After evaluation it was agreed to accept the tender which represented the best return to the Council in respect of price, quality and percentage of takings. The Pilot Scheme will run until 31 March 1999 and a full report will be submitted to the Committee in January 1999

The Committee agreed (a) that a report be submitted to the next meeting detailing the number of functions undertaken, the income accrued within the Pilot Scheme, and including a customer assessment of the scheme; and (b) that indicative bar prices should be included in the booking information packs within the centres involved in the pilot.

8. Irvine: Land at Victoria Roundabout

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on an area surplus to requirements at Victoria Roundabout, Irvine.

A housing development brief has been prepared for the site which relates to an area of Victoria Roundabout across Council-owned land. The land will only be sold if the proposed development takes place.

The Committee agreed (a) to declare the area of land surplus to the requirements of the Educational Services Directorate; and (b) to remit the matter to the Support Services Committee for its consideration.

9. Irvine: Land at Annick Road

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on an area of land surplus to requirements at Annick Road, Irvine, and presently leased as an agricultural let.

The Committee agreed (a) to declare the area of land surplus to the requirements of the Educational Services; and (b) to remit the matter to the Support Services Committee for its consideration.

10. Kilwinning: Tay Homes: Proposed Play Areas

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the proposed provision of play facilities by Tay Homes and the adoption of these for future maintenance.

Tay Homes are in the process of completing a development of residential properties at Woodside, Kilwinning. The original planning consent contained provision for a small community hall and kick-about pitch but following discussions with the Whitehirst Park and Woodside Residents' Association, it was considered that provision of a children's play area would be more appropriate.

Sites have been identified adjacent to Whitehirst Park and St Luke's Primary Schools and a draft plan developed which would provide integrated play facilities for children between 8 and 14 years of age. Tay Homes have agreed to fund the cost of the project to a maximum of £200,000 which would include provision of a capitalised maintenance sum to offset future maintenance costs.

The Committee agreed to (a) to accept the offer by Tay Homes to provide play facilities at Whitehirst Park; and (b) to adopt the sites for future maintenance.

11. Scheme of Revised Charges for Community Halls, Community Centres and Community Use of Schools

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on progress with the implementation of the Scheme of Revised Charges for Community Halls, Community Centres and the Community Use of Schools.

In December 1997 a Short-Life Working Group on Community Facilities recommended a revision of the letting scheme for community facilities. A standard pricing policy was introduced in February 1998 with the aim of resolving a number of difficulties identified by the Working Group by, amongst other things, simplifying the letting administration for front-line staff, creating a single scheme of charges and conditions which would apply to all schools and community centres and eliminating complicated pricing and discount arrangements that added to the administrative burden and cost. In addition, a letting scheme for the use of school accommodation outwith the school day or session was introduced in late May 1998.

A review of the effect of these changes on community organisations undertaken at the end of June 1998 suggested that while the new pricing policy was addressing the issues identified by the Working Group, some community organisations were experiencing difficulty in meeting letting and other programme costs. These organisations were,

however, making more effective use of accommodation and improving the utilisation of available budgets, and there had been no significant drop off in the volume of lets.

In order to gain a full assessment of the impact of the revision, a small Review Group consisting of senior officials from Community Education and representatives from the voluntary sector and Community Associations will be established to consider the current operation of the Scheme together with its effect on efficiency. The results of the investigation will be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

The Committee agreed that a further report on the conclusion of the review on the impact of the revised letting charges be submitted to the next meeting.

12. Kilwinning: Corsehill Bowling Club

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the condition of the bowling green at Corsehill Bowling Club, Kilwinning.

The facility consists of a four rink synthetic bowling green and small clubhouse and was built by the former Cunninghame District Council in the early 1980s and leased to the Corsehill Bowling Club. Over the years the condition of the synthetic surface has deteriorated and surveys have indicated a requirement for the synthetic carpet and concrete surface to be removed, re-screeded and a new carpet fitted at a total cost of around £36,000.

The item has been included in previous bids for Capital funding but due to competing demands and limited finance, was not approved. Without the remedial works the bowling surface will not be available for use.

The Committee agreed to refer the matter to the Corporate Strategy Committee for identification of finance within the Capital Plan.

The meeting ended at 2.45. p.m.