

Corporate Policy Standing Sub Committee
28 September 2005

IRVINE, 28 September 2005 - At a Meeting of the Corporate Policy Standing Sub Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Thomas Barr, John Bell, Alan Hill and David O'Neill.

In Attendance

I. Snodgrass, Chief Executive; J. Montgomery, Principal Performance Review Officer and M. McKeown, Corporate and Democratic Support Officer (Chief Executive's).

Chair

Councillor Barr in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Jean Highgate, Margaret McDougall, John Reid and Richard Wilkinson.

1. 2007 Member/Officer Working Group

Submitted report, being the Minutes of the Meeting of the 2007 Member/Officer Working Group held on 13 September 2005.

Noted.

2. Audit of Best Value & Community Planning: Improvement Plan Progress as at 31 August 2005

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on progress in implementing the Improvement Plan arising from the Controller of Audit's report on Best Value and Community Planning arrangements within the Council.

The appendix to the report summarised progress against the action points contained within the Improvement Plan. Of the 50 action points contained within the Plan, all are either on target or have slipped only to some extent in relation to the original Plan timescale. Where slippage has occurred this is considered to be within acceptable parameters and revised timescales have been agreed. The Council's external auditors, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, have confirmed that the Council is continuing to make good progress in implementing the Plan.

Noted.

3. Statutory Performance Indicators 2004/05

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the performance of the Council against Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) for 2004/05, and on proposed public reporting plans.

The Council has a duty to collate information and publicly report on its performance against a set of SPIs by 30 September each year. Sixty five SPIs were identified for 2004/05. These SPIs cover many, but not all Council services, and whilst they do not provide a comprehensive picture, they do nevertheless play an important role in assessing the performance of the Council. The external auditor has confirmed that all of the SPIs are "reliable", confirming the strength of the Council's corporate governance arrangements.

Many of the SPIs contain sub elements or "measures", and these measures are used by Audit Scotland to produce a performance Profile of each Council area. The Council's Profile for 2003/04 assessed performance on the basis of 75 measures. The appendix to the report summarised the Council's performance during 2004/05 against these 75 measures. A comparison with 2003/04 and 2002/03 was also provided in the report in respect of the measures that were directly comparable.

In previous years it has been the practice to publish highlights of the Council's performance against the SPIs in the Council newspaper and on the website, and to make information available through Council offices and libraries. These arrangements will continue in 2005.

At the same time the opportunity will be taken to conduct a readership survey by means of the Council newspaper "North Ayrshire NOW". This is in response to comments contained in the Audit's report on Best Value and Community Planning arrangements within the Council.

The Sub Committee agreed (a) to note progress against the Statutory Performance Indicators for 2004/05; (b) to approve the proposals for publicising the SPIs; and (c) that a readership survey be conducted by means of the Council's newspaper.

The meeting ended at 2.30 p.m.

**Corporate Policy Standing Sub Committee
28/09/2005**

Appendix No
CPS1

2007 Member/Officer Working Group
13 September 2005

IRVINE, 13 September 2005 – At a Meeting of the 2007 Member/Officer Working Group at 3.00 p.m.

Present

I Snodgrass, Chief Executive; David O'Neill; Richard Wilkinson; Alan Hill; Elizabeth McLardy; I T Mackay, Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Protective); and G Lawson, Head of Corporate and Democratic Support.

Chair

The Chief Executive in the Chair.

1. 2007 Election Update

Submitted note by the Chief Executive advising that the current advice is that the Local Government and Scottish Parliamentary Elections will be held on the same day in 2007. No decision has yet been made on the form of STV which will be used at the Local Government Election.

It is also likely that electronic counting will be in operation for both elections and trials are being organised in January/February 2006. The Chief Executive, in his capacity as Returning Officer, along with his Election staff will attend the trials. Members and political parties will also have the opportunity to view the trials.

Noted.

2. Alternative Models of Administration

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate and Democratic Support on the investigation into Cabinet systems currently operating in local authorities in Scotland.

Five local authorities operate a type of Cabinet system at present and these systems differ in each authority.

The report recommended that visits be made to East Lothian and Scottish Border Councils who operate different Cabinet systems but which would be worth investigating in the event that North Ayrshire Council set up a Cabinet system following the Elections in 2007.

The Working Group agreed that arrangements be made to allow members of the Working Group to visit both Councils to meet with relevant members and officers to see how the Cabinet systems operate in each authority.

3. Developing the Members' Scrutiny Role

Submitted note by the Chief Executive following a meeting which he had with Colin Mair, the Chief Executive of the Local Government Improvement Services on developing the scrutiny role of Members.

Mr Mair has offered to provide training sessions to Members of North Ayrshire Council to assist in their development of the scrutiny role. Initially there will be a training sessions provided for Conveners and Leaders of the Opposition Parties in view of their particular role.

It was agreed (a) that the Council take up the offer of training offered by Colin Mair and that the Chief Executive now write to him to arrange for this to be done; and (b) that should Members of the Working Group have any suggestions on what they consider the content of the training would be particularly beneficial to them they should advise the Chief Executive accordingly.

It was further agreed that the potential for other members to attend the training sessions if desired would be investigated.

4. Widening Access to Council Membership

The Working Group considered a note on widening access to Council membership and in particular the action points from the Renewing Local Democracy report previously circulated.

With regard to points 2.1 – 2.9 (Finding out more and supporting Prospective Candidates) it was noted that it is too early to implement the suggestions and that further guidance should be provided before action can be taken.

With regard to paragraphs 3.1 – 4.0 (Supporting Councillors) it was noted that it was suggested that meetings should be held in groups/clusters rather than having meetings on consecutive days. This will be discussed further in due course together with arrangements for providing member support.

Noted.

5. Coalition Working

Submitted note by the Chief Executive on a meeting held with the Chief Executive of Perth and Kinross Council on the issues arising from the change to a Coalition Administration following the 2003 Elections.

The various points arising from the meeting were noted and discussed. One of the points which will be taken on board immediately is that the chief officers should provide briefings on a regular basis for each of the political group leaders on key issues and emerging business. Advice will also be available for each of the groups on a private basis at the time of budget preparation.

The Working Group agreed that the necessary IT equipment and expertise should be available to allow a smooth changeover to a new Administration. This will be considered further in due course.

The meeting ended at 4.10 p.m.