

Corporate Strategy Committee  
22 January 1996

**Irvine, 22 January 1996** - At a Meeting of the Corporate Strategy Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

**Present**

James Clements, Patrick Browne, Jack Carson, Ian Clarkson, Stewart Dewar, Thomas Dickie, John Donn, David Gallagher, Jane Gorman, James Jennings, Joseph McKinney, Thomas Morris, David O'Neill, Robert Reilly, John Sillars, George Steven and Samuel Taylor.

**In Attendance**

The Directors of Education, Financial Services, Social Work, Housing Services and Community and Recreational Services, the Head of Corporate Business, the Principal Officer (Policy/Administration) and a Corporate Policy Officer (Mr. Osborne).

**Chair**

Mr. Clements in the Chair.

**Apologies for Absence**

Samuel Gooding and Robert Rae.

**1. Capital Programme 1996/99**

Submitted (a) report by the Director of Financial Services on North Ayrshire Council's Capital Expenditure Programme for 1996/1999; and (b) details of maintenance projects and new build/purchase projects. Copies of both had previously been circulated.

The Secretary of State had requested that Shadow Councils' Financial Plans covering the period 1996/99 were to be submitted as a basis for Capital Consent Allocations for 1996/97. In view of the timescale the bids were prepared, prioritised and submitted to the Scottish Office on 22 December 1995 who were advised that North Ayrshire Council's Plan had not been approved by the Council and may be subject to review. The details of the Plan consist of mainly the Capital Plans of both Cunninghame District Council and Strathclyde Regional Council.

The new form of submission to the Scottish Office now requires Councils to identify major capital programmes for new buildings/acquisitions in excess of £0.5m and refurbishment/maintenance projects in excess of £2m. Each project over £2m should be Private Finance Initiative tested.

It is anticipated that only one allocation covering all Non-Housing Services including Non-HRA will be issued towards the end of February. No details of the separate allocations will be given. Capital Funded from Current Revenue (CFCR) will be restricted throughout Scotland to £62m and brought into the Section 94 Consent

limits.

The Committee agreed to approve the submission for North Ayrshire's Capital Programme for 1996/99 already submitted to the Scottish Office.

## **2. Revenue Budget 1996/97**

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services on the proposed Revenue Budget for 1996/97. The Draft Budget has been prepared taking into account various matters such as the agreement reached on the "mis-match issue" which transferred substantial Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) resources from North Ayrshire Council to other authorities such as Glasgow, Argyll and Bute and West Dunbartonshire for a period of three years. The capping criteria has been fixed at 0.8% above the Notional Budget.

The Budget is based on the disaggregated budget figures for 1995/96 from Strathclyde Regional Council and Cunninghame District Council. They have been adjusted to reflect the costs and savings of the new structures and the costs of maintaining the current level of service without any allowance for growth. The figures also reflect the additional responsibilities transferring from Irvine Development Corporation and the decision by the Government to transfer bursaries to Further Education.

The Draft Budget for North Ayrshire Council after adjustment amounts to £149,832m. The capping limit advised by the Secretary of State allows for a Budget of £143,217m and consequently savings of £6.615m are required to prevent capping.

The report indicated possible savings between 2% and 6% based on the relationship between the Draft Provisional Budget for the particular service and the Grant Aided Expenditure figure. Where there is a larger gap the percentage saving is also recommended at the higher level.

The Committee agreed that the report be referred to all Service Committees of the Council and that the Chair and Vice-Chair(s) of each Committee along with the appropriate Director establish how the savings target can be achieved and thereafter report back to Special Meetings of all Services Committees to be held on 21 and 22 February 1996.

## **3. Grants to Voluntary and Community Organisations**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive, copies of which had previously been circulated. Arrangements are now required for the processing of grants to voluntary and community organisations and the consideration of all other requests for financial assistance for 1996/97.

It was agreed at a Meeting of Lead Officers from the 12 Unitary Authorities in July 1995 that Strathclyde Regional Council would receive, process and transmit all applications for financial assistance under the current grant schemes for 1996/97. It was further agreed that where possible a common approach should be applied to the

consideration of grant applications.

The Directors of Social Work for the Unitary Authorities within Strathclyde have proposed that in the case of cross-boundary organisations early consideration should be given to funding at current levels for the coming financial year 1996/97. Applications from local organisations operating exclusively within North Ayrshire would be considered by North Ayrshire Council without any recommendations from Strathclyde Regional Council.

All applications will be submitted to North Ayrshire Council during January 1996 with assessment reports and comments from Strathclyde Regional Council. It will be necessary to ensure that organisations whose applications are targeted purely at North Ayrshire suffer no detriment due to organisations who are applying on a cross-boundary basis.

The Council agreed on 25 October 1995 that the five Area Committees should have devolved Grant Budgets. It is proposed that these should include all grants to community and voluntary organisations operating exclusively within the Area Committee boundary where applications are invited on a rolling programme throughout the financial year.

The report detailed how grant applications will be considered and an Officer/Member Working Group will be set up to monitor the arrangements for grant assistance for 1996/97 and make recommendations for any future amendments or developments.

The Committee agreed (a) that an Officers' Working Group comprising officers from the Chief Executive, Social Work, Education, Community and Recreational Services, Housing Services and Financial Services Directorates be appointed to advise on the consideration of all requests for financial assistance; (b) to remit responsibility for the consideration of requests for financial assistance to the Service Committees detailed in the Appendix (**Appendix CS1**); (c) that all other requests for financial assistance be referred to the Officers' Working Group to provide advice on which Committee would consider such requests; (d) that the responsibility for the consideration of grants to local community and voluntary groups be remitted to the Area Committees within whose boundary they wholly operate; (e) that in determining awards and considering applications all Committees should give priority to those organisations whose activities more clearly benefit the people of North Ayrshire or in the case of cross-boundary or national organisations are consistent with the policies and strategies of the Council; and (f) that at a future Meeting of the Committee consideration be given to membership of an Officer/Member Working Group to monitor the arrangements for considering grant assistance for 1996/97 and make recommendations for further developments.

The Committee further agreed that a report on Trusts which have been dormant for some years be submitted to a future Meeting of the Committee with recommendations as to how these could now be implemented.

#### **4. Programme for Partnership**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the implications of the Secretary of State's consultation on Deregulating Local Government for the proposed changes in the operation of the Urban Programme set out in Programme for Partnership. Copies of the report had previously been circulated.

The Council on 6 September 1995 agreed to proceed with the preparation of a Council Area Wide Strategy in consultation with key partners and to submit proposals for "Priority Partnership Area (PPA)" status for Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston.

The date for submission of the Partnership Agreement and Regeneration Strategy to the Scottish Office has been postponed from October 1995 to March 1996 and this makes it unlikely that any resources will be made available during 1996/97 for new initiatives under the Urban Programme. It will not be possible either to put in place a distribution formula for Urban Programme Resources in time for 1996/97 should the consultation lead to the abolition of the specific grants.

The Committee agreed (a) to re-affirm its support for the principles underlying the Programme for Partnership which they considered should be implemented regardless of the outcome of the consultation process; and (b) that the Chief Executive request the Secretary of State to confirm that these resources will not be diminished and that transitional arrangements are put in place immediately to ensure that the Urban Programme is developed during 1996/97 especially in relation to those voluntary sector projects whose funding is due to terminate and are eligible for extension funding.

#### **5. Customer Comments**

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on the establishment of a Corporate Customer Comments System. Copies of the report had previously been circulated.

It is proposed that from 1 April 1996 North Ayrshire Council should have a Corporate Customer Comments System for all departments which system should be threefold and encourage people (a) to make suggestions for improvements in North Ayrshire services; (b) to make comments both positive and negative about such services; and (c) where necessary complain about such services.

It is essential that any system should be in as simple a fashion as possible, should cover all Council services and should aim at the resolution of problems at the lowest possible level. The system should also incorporate a facility for ongoing comments, suggestions and complaints including those made to members.

The Committee agreed (a) that a Corporate Customer Comments System be established; and (b) that the Head of Corporate Business, after consultation with appropriate officers, submit a detailed scheme to the next Meeting of the Committee.

## **6. North Ayrshire Council Launch**

Submitted report by Head of Corporate Business, copies of which had previously been circulated.

The report detailed proposals for the launch of North Ayrshire Council on 1 April 1996. The cost of the launch amounts to £10,195.

It is also proposed to hold a One Day Conference for Middle Managers and above at the end of February 1996 to discuss their role in the development of North Ayrshire Council and, for all non-school staff, it is proposed to hold Seminars at the Magnum and Barrfields during the week commencing 25 March 1996.

An Officer Working Group on the launch of North Ayrshire Council met on 19 January 1996 and will submit a report to the next Meeting of the Committee.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve expenditure of £10,195 on the promotional materials for the launch of North Ayrshire Council; and (b) that the Middle Managers Conference and Staff Awareness Seminars be held on the proposed dates.

## **7. Membership and Representation on Outside Bodies: War Pensions Agency**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on an invitation by the War Pensions Agency that North Ayrshire Council nominate a member to serve on their South West Scotland War Pensions Committee.

The Committee agreed to continue consideration of this item to allow further information on the Committee to be ascertained.

## **8. Urgent Items**

The Chair agreed that Items 9 and 10 be considered as a matter of urgency.

## **9. Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority**

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business along with a report by Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority who are seeking the views of Unitary Authorities on proposals for accommodation for the PTA at Consort House, Glasgow.

Capital costs on accommodation works will involve expenditure which would be passed on to the Unitary Authorities on a pro rata basis. The total expenditure would be in the region of £800,000. The PTA have not proposed any alternative accommodation strategy.

The Committee agreed that the Head of Corporate Business advise Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority to consider and cost alternative accommodation

strategies and, in due course, to advise North Ayrshire Council of these.

#### **10. North Ayrshire Licensing Board**

The Committee agreed that a report on which members should serve on North Ayrshire Licensing Board be submitted to the Protective Services Committee on 1 February 1996.

#### **11. Exclusion of Public**

Resolved, in terms of Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, to exclude from the Meeting the press and the public for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 5 of Part I of Schedule 7A of the Act.

#### **12. Burns International Festival**

Submitted report by the Director of Community and Recreational Services, copies of which had previously been circulated.

Joint Meetings of the Shadow Unitary Authorities have been held within the last month to discuss the current situation of the Burns International Festival Company Ltd. The Festival Company Board has now formally agreed to wind-up the Festival Company. Any debts can be met from within the Company's existing resources and there should be no further liability on the funding partners.

The Festival Board has expressed a desire that the Festival should continue in some form and the Joint Meeting of the Shadow Unitary Authorities, in principle, concurs with this. It has therefore been proposed that the new Shadow Authorities i.e. Dumfries and Galloway and North Ayrshire, South Ayrshire and East Ayrshire in conjunction with Dumfries and Galloway Enterprise Company, Ayrshire Enterprise Company and the two Area Tourist Boards effectively form a Partnership Arrangement to co-ordinate the staging, marketing and promotion of a variety of events around the Burns Theme.

Two events have been provisionally arranged within North Ayrshire and a report will be submitted to Cunninghame District Council's Leisure Committee in February.

No further events have been scheduled for North Ayrshire and any further involvement would require the Council to make a financial contribution which would have to be met from the Revenue Budget for the Community and Recreational Services Directorate in 1996/97.

A press conference has been arranged to take place on 24th January at Cumnock and Doon Valley District Council's Offices in Lugar which will formally announce the winding-up of the Company and announce the new Partnership.

The Committee agreed (a) that North Ayrshire Council continue to be involved in the

Partnership Arrangement of the relevant Shadow Unitary Authorities, Enterprise Companies and Area Tourist Boards on the possibility of continuing to stage events commemorating Burns Bi-Centenary with North Ayrshire Council being represented by the Director of Community and Recreational Services; (b) that the Director of Community and Recreational Services (i) attend the press conference to be held in Lugar on 24 January, (ii) report to the Community and Recreational Services Committee on any events proposed between April and December 1996 with the Arts and Cultural Services Manager representing North Ayrshire Council on the Events Working Group proposed by the Joint Partnership Arrangement and (iii) propose to the Joint Partnership Arrangement consideration of establishing a permanent Working Group of the organisations involved to examine possible arrangements for the wider marketing and promotion of the South West of Scotland as a tourist destination; and (c) to recommend to Cunninghame District Council's Leisure Committee on 12 February 1996 that support be maintained for the two events provisionally booked at the Barrfields Pavilion Theatre, Largs and Harbour Arts Centre, Irvine.

The Meeting ended at 3.00 p.m.