

The Executive of North Ayrshire Council
8 December 2009

IRVINE, 8 December 2009 - At a Meeting of the Executive of North Ayrshire Council at 3.00 p.m.

Present

David O'Neill, John Reid, Tom Barr, John Bell, Margaret McDougall and Peter McNamara.

Also Present

Anthea Dickson and Alan Munro.

In Attendance

E. Murray, Chief Executive; B. Docherty, Corporate Director, S. Gault, Head of Community Care and S. Paterson, Head of Children, Families and Criminal Justice (Social Services); C. Kirk, Corporate Director and J. Ward, Head of Service (Educational Services); I.T. Mackay, Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Protective); A. Herbert, Assistant Chief Executive (Finance); O. Clayton, Head of Housing and Building Services, C. Hatton, Head of Environment and Related Services and R. Small, Head of Infrastructure and Design Services (Property Services); J. Montgomery, General Manager, A. Osborne, Policy Officer, C. Rowney, Communications Officer and M. Anderson, Committee Services Officer (Chief Executive's Service).

Chair

David O'Neill in the Chair.

1. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Bell declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 2 (Radio City and the Delivery of Council Services in the Garnock Valley) in terms of Standing Order 16, and took no part in the discussion thereon.

2. Radio City and the Delivery of Council Services in the Garnock Valley

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the outcome of an assessment of the potential of the Radio City building and facilities in Kilbirnie to contribute to the overall delivery of Council and community services in the Garnock Valley.

At its meeting on 28 July 2009, the Executive agreed that funding of £40,000 be made available to allow Radio City Trust to remain operational for the remainder of 2009/10. It was further agreed that a rigorous assessment be made of the potential of the Trust's building and facilities in Kilbirnie to contribute to the overall delivery of Council and community services in the Garnock Valley, including consideration of both financial and operational issues, and that a further report to be submitted to the Executive on the outcome.

The review of the Radio City premises was undertaken in the context of a complete review of all Council accommodation and properties which is being undertaken as part of the Council's Change Programme. Stage 1 of the review of Radio City involved compiling lists of all Council buildings/properties in Kilbirnie, both operational and non-operational. A mapping exercise identified a cluster of properties around or near the town centre and Radio City building. Stage 2 considered options for rationalisation, with all services submitting written responses, and an options appraisal exercise being carried out. Recommendations were reached at Stage 3 of the review. The project team concluded that concentrating all Council services in the Radio City building would not be in the best interests of the Council, nor would there be an advantage to the Council in locating any of its stand-alone Area Offices in Radio City.

As part of the wider review of the delivery of Council services in the Kilbirnie area, it was noted that Radio City may have a role to play as a location for delivering particular Council-led activities subject to budget availability. However, the intention would be to address this further as part of a report to the Executive on the wider review of services.

The Executive agreed that (a) it would not be in the best interests of the Council to consider relocating Council services in the Radio City building; (b) no further general financial assistance be given to the Radio City Trust; and (c) proposals in relation to the future delivery of Council services in Kilbirnie be submitted to a future meeting of the Executive.

3. Ardrossan: New Enterprise Workshop

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on current issues surrounding the New Enterprise Workshop based in Ardrossan and recommending appropriate action in respect of the future of the facility.

The economic landscape in Ardrossan has changed radically since the establishment of the New Enterprise Workshop in Ardrossan over 15 years ago. Many of the traditional local industries such as electronics, chemicals and engineering having either significantly reduced or disappeared entirely. As a consequence, use of the New Enterprise Workshop facility has diminished.

Repeated attempts to re-market the workshop's existing services have proved unsuccessful and falling activity levels indicate an absence of demand and need from clients. In the past 3 years, only 8 clients have been assisted into self-employment and/or set up new businesses and only 12 products have been partially developed, with none as yet having led to volume production or a sustainable business. The facility is not, therefore, deemed to be sustainable.

The Executive agreed (a) to approve the closure of the New Enterprise Workshop in Ardrossan; and (b) to instruct the Chief Executive to take steps to (i) market the units and (ii) begin formal consultation with the member of staff at the New Enterprise Workshop.

4. Tourism in Ayrshire: Minute of Agreement with Visit Scotland

Submitted report by the Chief Executive to seek approval of a Minute of Agreement between North Ayrshire and Visit Scotland in relation to the provision of services and funding to be delivered by Visit Scotland.

There have been delays in the preparation of a Minute of Agreement between the Council and Visit Scotland for the current year due to changes in the negotiation of services. There has been concern around the lack of impact at the local level and the level of funding required to operate manned tourism information services across the Ayrshire area.

A final Minute of Agreement has now been agreed by all parties to fund Visit Scotland activities within North Ayrshire to a maximum of £63,500 for 2009/10. Appendix 1 to the report provided details of the services covered by the agreement, including:-

- Production of the Ayrshire and Arran publications, including the 2010 accommodation listing and visitor guides;
- Participation in national, regional and niche marketing campaigns 2009/10;
- The maintenance and development of the Ayrshire and Arran website;
- Specialised targeting of direct mail campaigns 2009/10;
- Provision of marketing and quality assurance advice to business; and
- Provision of tourist information services, including an all-year information centre in Brodick and a personal information centre in Largs.

The agreement also outlined the national Visit Scotland marketing activities, including attendance at trade fayres, sales missions and events and exhibitions to promote the Scottish brand.

Members expressed concern about the effectiveness of the Visit Scotland website in attracting tourists to the area and the limited areas within North Ayrshire covered by the website. Clarification was provided on the relatively small cost of the website in relation to the total proposed funding to Visit Scotland and Members were advised of an ongoing review of the branding of Ayrshire as a whole.

The Chair made reference to information provided by Councillor Currie on the significant proportion of North Ayrshire's tourism income generated by the Isle of Arran.

The Executive agreed (a) to approve the terms set out in the Minute of Agreement with Visit Scotland; (b) to proceed with discussions with Visit Scotland and other Ayrshire Councils to conclude a 2010 agreement for the start of the 2010/11 financial year; and (c) that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Executive on the outcome of the current review of the branding of Ayrshire as a whole.

5. Report on the Senior Management Structure of North Ayrshire Council

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the outcome of a review of the Senior Management Team of the Council.

A review of the Council's current management structure has been carried out in the context of the significant financial challenges facing the Council over the next few years and the need to focus activity on tackling a legacy of multiple deprivation in North Ayrshire. Appendices 1 and 2 to the report showed the existing and proposed new structures, respectively.

In terms of the revised structure, it was proposed that:-

- the Chief Executive no longer retain direct responsibility for the Corporate Services Group and instead focus on managing the Council's Change and Reform Programme, creating and delivering a revised strategy for economic development and regeneration, and managing the optimisation of the workforce as the Council reduces its staffing costs;
- the 4 positions of Assistant Chief Executive be deleted;
- the 3 Corporate Directors have a wider range of responsibilities, as detailed in section 3.4 of the report;
- a new post of Solicitor to the Council be created, to include responsibility for Legal, Planning, ICT and Customer Service;
- the number of Heads of Service be reduced from 10 to 9;
- Building Services continue to be managed by the current Head of Service, pending completion of the current review of the service;

- The Assistant Chief Executive (Human Resources) report directly to the Chief Executive and be re-designated as the Head of Human Resources; and
- The Assistant Chief Executive (Business Change and Customer Service) be known as the ICT and Customer Service Manager.

It is anticipated that the proposals will be implemented with effect from 1 April 2010 and accrue annual savings of £250,000, including on-costs following full implementation. Initial savings in year 1 are expected to be around £200,000.

Clarification was provided that, in section 3.4 of the report, reference to the Corporate Director (Social Services and Health) assuming over-sight of the Council's "Housing stock", should be amended to read "Housing function".

The Executive agreed (a) to approve the proposals detailed in paragraphs 3.2 to 3.8 of the report; (b) that the Chief Executive progress with the implementation of the new structure; and (c) to note that the annual savings of £250,000 will contribute towards the Council's efficiency programme.

6. Community Services

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on a proposed reorganisation of the current arrangements to deliver community service functions within Educational Services.

Educational Services has made early progress in rationalising services, with the Community Development Team from Social Services merging with the Community Learning and Development Service earlier in 2009. In addition, the Education Resource Service has recently been integrated with the Public Library Services and the museums and archives services are in the process of integrating within North Ayrshire Museum.

In order to provide more joined up services, it was proposed that a new service structure for community services be agreed by January 2010. The proposed new Community Services within Educational Services would deliver the 2 key pillars of:-

- Community Development (incorporating the Community Learning and Development Service, Active Schools and Community Club Development);
- Information and Culture (comprising the Library and Information Service, Arts and Culture, Museums and Children's Outreach).

Phase 1 would involve the rationalisation of promoted posts across the services in question. Phase 2 would relate to the rationalisation of administration/clerical support functions and offices, improvement in the deployment of resources and facilities, and the development of Third Sector partners.

The proposals would achieve one Community Services grouping incorporating the 5 existing services, 10 promoted posts (reduced from 30), and proposed total savings from the staffing budget of £794,346. The anticipated cost of the proposed staff refresh exercise would be up to £1m in one-off costs, with the pay back period of approximately 15 months for these costs.

Appendix 1 to the report provided a schematic of the proposed management structure. Sections 3.11 to 3.18 gave further details of the roles of relevant officers and partnership working.

Members requested, and received, clarification on the timescale for the implementation of the new structure, the role of community learning centres and the impact of the proposed changes in the light of the planned HMIE inspection of secondary schools.

The Executive agreed (a) to implement the new Community Services structure as detailed in section 3 of the report; and (b) that a further report be submitted to the Executive early in 2010 on the implementation plan for the new structure.

7. Provision of Support to Unpaid Carers

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services) on progress with regard to the support of carers.

As part of the Concordat agreement between the Scottish Government and local Government, there was a commitment to provide additional support to carers. Local Authorities were asked to deliver progressively 2 extra respite weeks per annum. Respite care provides unpaid carers with some much needed 'time out' from their caring responsibilities and can be delivered within someone's own home or provided in a range of care settings.

Tables 1 and 2 within Appendix 1 to the report outlined the volumes of respite care provided in the years 2007/08 and 2008/09 broken down into the 3 major age groups and outlining the different types of respite provided.

It was proposed that £168,00 be released from the Council's centralised contingency fund in the current financial year, to be utilised as follows:-

- £25,000 to meet the current demand for the Short Break Service for Adults;
- £74,000 to be transferred to the respite budget to allow a corresponding transfer back to the care at home budget and facilitate the provision of respite at the current level; and
- £69,000 to allow the IMPACCT service to provide additional respite of 275 overnights, 90 full day respite and 200 half-day respite sessions.

The Executive agreed to release of £168,000 from the centralised contingency fund for the current financial year, to meet the Concordat agreement on respite provision.

8. Residential Childcare Strategy

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services) on a request for a variation of registration for The Meadows and Achnamara Children's Units; the projected completion dates for the approved new children's units in Redstone Avenue and Pennyburn; and the intention to bring further reports to the Executive on fostering services and the possible extension of residential provision through the construction of a new unit.

At present, the Council's registration with the Care Commission for residential children's units is 32. However, the two new purpose-built residential childcare units, Achnamara and The Meadows, have been operating with numbers above the registration level and this is leading to more critical Care Commission reports, albeit that the units have generally received grades of 4 (good) or 5 (very good).

It was proposed that Social Services seek to increase its registration capacity from 32 to 36 placements by requesting a variation in registration for The Meadows and Achnamara from 6 to 8 placements. This would be a temporary measure allowing the fostering strategy to progress with its recruitment campaign. As the fostering establishment increases, Social Services would endeavour to operate at its optimal level of 6 young people per unit for both Achnamara and The Meadows.

Two further 6-bedded units are due for completion in 2011 at Redstone Avenue and West Byrehill in Pennyburn. A project plan for the completion of the two new units was set out at Appendix 1 to the report. Further reports will be submitted to the Executive on fostering services and increasing residential provision, including the possible construction of a further new unit.

Members sought, and received, clarification on the arrangements being made to ensure that young people at Achnamara and The Meadows were not disadvantaged by increasing the capacity of the units and on the need for effective communication with the communities in which new units are built.

The Executive agreed (a) that a request be made to the Care Commission to vary the registration of Achnamara and The Meadows Children's Units; (b) to note the projected completion dates for the children's units in Redstone Avenue and at the Pennyburn, West Byrehill site; (c) to note that further reports will be submitted to future meetings of the Executive on fostering and the possible extension of residential provision through the construction of a further new unit; (d) that a communication strategy be put in place to ensure effective communication with communities where new units are to be located; and (e) that a further report be submitted to the Executive in a year's time to provide an update on progress in relation to the residential childcare strategy.

9. Irvine: Bridgegate House – Exterior Remedial Project

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Service) on the position reached in respect of exterior remediation works to Bridgegate House in Irvine.

A feasibility study, funded jointly by the Council and Irvine Bay Regeneration Company, was commissioned to establish essential baseline information, such as costs, designs, method of operation in relation to the potential external refurbishment of Bridgegate House, Irvine. The sums currently allowed for the refurbishment works in the Council and Irvine Bay Regeneration budgets are £2.5m and £0.8m, respectively.

2 schemes have been prepared for the external refurbishment of the building. Option A is based on replacing the existing leaking curtain walling systems with a new system comprising glazed panels with integrated opening vents, at a cost of £3.3m. Option B is based on a finish of natural stone and timber at a cost of £3.74m. Both sums include fees and a 5% contingency. Both options potentially fulfil the requirement to reverse the physical decline of the building and put in place an iconic building which will lift the surrounding area.

Illustrations of Option A and Option B were circulated at the meeting for Members' information.

Members expressed the view that consideration would require to be given to parking and transportation issues if more staff were to be located at Bridgegate House. Clarification was sought, and received, on lease arrangements with retail unit operators affected by any refurbishment works and on funding considerations in respect of internal works to the building. The view was also expressed that, where possible, the Council should seek to engage local contractors to undertake refurbishment works.

The Executive agreed (a) in principle to proceed with Option A; (b) that the Corporate Director (Property Services) continues to work in collaboration with Irvine Bay Regeneration Company and seek detailed tenders for the external renovation of Bridgegate; and (c) that a further report be submitted to a future meeting of the Executive on proposals for the internal use of the building.

10. Review of the Special Uplift Service for Household Waste

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on the outcome of a review of the special uplift service for household waste and to seek agreement on proposed actions arising from it.

The Council currently provides a free of charge special uplift service for the collection of heavy or large items of household waste that cannot fit within a wheeled bin and including the type of items that residents would take with them when moving house.

There are a number of developing economic and environmental factors that the service needs to respond to, including the requirements of the EU Landfill Directive, the National Waste Strategy and Statutory Performance Indicators/targets within the Single Outcome Agreement. In order to meet the drivers for change and to seek to influence the behaviours of householders, the following initiatives were proposed:-

- the introduction of charges for the special uplift service;
- the provision of facilities enabling high levels of recycling of large and heavy items of household waste through improvements to the recycling centre in Largs;
- the development of re-use services through the Third Sector; and
- a promotion and education campaign to increase awareness of the environmental and economic benefits of using alternative services.

Members requested, and received, clarification on access to recycling centre facilities for residents in the Three Towns area; measures to monitor and address fly-tipping; the possible need to extend the opening hours of recycling centres; Scottish Government support for the Third Sector; and the issue of concessionary charges.

The Executive agreed (a) to implement a flat rate charge, payable at the time of service request, of £12 for the collection of up to 5 items of household waste by the special uplift service, with effect from 1 April 2010, with items in excess of 5 to be charged for on a case by case basis to reflect the service costs incurred; (b) that the charging structure be reviewed on an annual basis; (c) to authorise the Head of Environment and Related Services to actively engage with charities and community organisations to promote the services they offer in respect of the re-use of unwanted household items; (d) to the development of a scheme of improvement works at the Largs Household Waste Recycling Centre to increase the recycling and re-use of materials deposited; (e) to implement a promotions and education campaign to increase the use of services that are more environmentally beneficial than the special uplift service; and (f) that a report be submitted to the Executive on (i) the operation of the charging policy and (ii) the incidence of fly-tipping.

11. Review of Community Warden Service

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on a proposed review of the deployment of Community Warden teams.

At its meeting on 27 January 2009, the Executive noted the success of the Community Warden service model and agreed to submit a budget bid for funding for the deployment of an additional Warden team in an area to be identified. At its special meeting on 12 February 2009, the Council agreed to fund the additional team.

Information was then gathered and analysed to seek to establish where the additional team should be deployed. However, the results of this exercise were inconclusive and failed to identify an area to be prioritised.

The financial climate has altered since the collection and analysis of the data. In the circumstances, it was proposed that consideration be given to ensuring the best use is made of the existing Warden service provision, rather than proceeding with the proposed extension of the service to include a further team. It was suggested that a review be carried out in consultation with Strathclyde Police, including an examination of:-

- the location of the Warden teams;
- mobile teams and flexible deployment between areas;
- joint working with the Police and other partners; and
- the remit of the Warden service.

Members requested, and received clarification on how teams might work flexibly and the potential impact of this on areas with an existing Warden team, and the need for an exit strategy to be in place prior to any decision to remove a Community Warden service either from a particular area or more generally.

The Executive agreed to recommend to the Council (a) not to proceed with the establishment of an additional Community Warden team; and (b) that a review of the current Community Warden Service be carried out, as detailed in section 3 of the report, including consideration of the issue of an exit strategy.

12. Largs: Moorburn House Memorabilia

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the current position with regard to the housing of Moorburn House, Largs, memorabilia.

The North Coast Area Committee has considered reports on proposals to re-house the memorabilia previously held in the Chambers at Moorburn House, Largs which requires to be relocated as a consequence of the sale of the property.

St Columba's Parish Church and the Largs and District Historical Society have both expressed an interest in obtaining the items. Agreement has been reached to divide the items between the 2 organisations as set out in section 2.1 of the report. The artefacts themselves will, however, remain in the ownership of the Council.

The Executive agreed that the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Protective) be authorised to negotiate loan agreements with the Largs Museum Trust and St. Columba's Parish Church to allow the items of memorabilia from Moorburn House, Largs, to be displayed.

13. Health Improvement

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on an overview of the Council's role as a health improvement organisation and to provide examples of specific activity.

At its meeting on 2 June 2009, the Executive agreed to receive a report to a future meeting on the Council's health improvement role.

The Joint Health Improvement Plan (JHIP) 2007-11 was the original Community Planning document which outlined the Community Planning Partnership's commitment to improving health and well being. With the adoption of the Single Outcome Agreement and SOA Action Plan, the outcomes from the JHIP have now been subsumed into the SOA.

In partnership with other agencies, the Council has a lead role in a range of activities aimed at improving health and reducing health inequalities. Sections 2.2 and 2.3 of the report provided examples of some of the work being carried out, including initiatives such as Healthy Working Lives (to improve employee health and well-being), Health Promoting Schools, the Core Paths Plan (which provides increased opportunities for physical activity) and the Staff Travel Plan (to encourage employees to commute to work more actively by walking, cycling and journeysharing).

The CPP SOA Action Plan contains a range of actions planned over the next year to tackle health inequalities jointly with the NHS Ayrshire and Arran. The Inequality in Health Group will continue to support and maintain this work.

Members expressed the view that more joint working required to take place with Health partners to tackle health issues linked to social deprivation and noted the role of the Irvine Bay Urban Regeneration Company in respect of the relationship between social regeneration and health.

The Chief Executive advised of a planned meeting with the Director of Public Health and the Chief Executive of NHS Ayrshire and Arran and the opportunity to discuss more direct involvement by NHS specialists in relation to the Council's health improvement role.

Noted.

14. Carbon Management Programme: Progress Report 2008/09

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on the reduction in the Council's emissions of carbon dioxide during 2008/09 and identifying projects which will continue to deliver reductions up to 2014/15.

The Council has set up a cross-service Carbon Management Team to investigate and develop proposals to reduce the Council's carbon dioxide emissions. A Strategy and Implementation Plan (SIP) was approved by the Team in May 2007. As part of the Plan, an annual report is produced on the progress of the Carbon Reduction Programme.

The baseline for carbon emission reduction was 2005/06. For that year, the Council emitted 67,719 tonnes of carbon dioxide. Appendix 1 to the report provided a breakdown of those emissions. Table 2 of the appendix showed the potential savings in emissions, namely the difference between the "reduced emissions scenario" (calculated to take into account emissions which are lower subsequent to emissions reduction projects) and the "business as usual" case (calculated on the basis of taking no action to reduce emissions).

34 projects have been identified by the Carbon Management Team as ways of reducing the Council's carbon dioxide emissions. Table 3 detailed the CO₂ savings from 2008/09 projects, which exceeded the reduction targets by a total of 2915 tonnes of carbon dioxide (or around 30%). Table 4 set out proposed projects for 2009/10.

Noted.

The Meeting ended at 4.55 p.m.