

Support Services Committee
10 February 1998

Irvine, 10 February 1998 - At a Meeting of the Support Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

David O'Neill, Alan Munro, James Clements, Stewart Dewar, John Donn, Elliot Gray, Margaret Highet, James Jennings and George Steven.

In Attendance

The Head of Corporate Business; the Director of Financial Services; the Personnel Services Manager; the Legal Services Manager; the Architectural Services Manager; D. Addison, Head of Revenue Service (Financial Services); A. Blakely, Corporate IT Adviser (IT Services); and J. Bannatyne, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

Chair

Mr. O'Neill in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Patrick Browne, David Munn and Richard Wilkinson.

1. Minutes Confirmed

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Support Services Committee held on 16 December 1997, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Chief Executive and Corporate Support Services: Capital Expenditure Bids 1998/99

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on a prioritised programme of capital expenditure bids for consideration as part of the process of Capital Budget Planning for 1998/99.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the prioritised list; and (b) that the list of departmental bids be referred to the Corporate Strategy Committee for consideration.

3. Collection Statements

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services on the current collection levels in respect of Community Charge and Council Tax to 31 January 1998.

A total of £74,000 was collected in respect of Community Charge during December 1997 and a total of £125,000 was collected in January 1998. The outstanding recoverable debt due to North Ayrshire Council in this respect is now £17,200,000.

The sum of £2,718,000 was collected during December 1997 in respect of the Council Tax for 1997/98 and £2,808,000 was collected in January 1998. The outstanding recoverable debt due to North Ayrshire Council in this respect is £8,726,000.

The Scottish Debt Recovery Unit, set up and funded by the Scottish Office for an initial period of one year, has identified £534,408 of debt. To date 112 arrangements for Council Tax arrears have been made totalling £105,327 and 224 arrangements for Community Charge arrears totalling £101,610. Persons initially being targeted by the Unit are those not on income support

and those not receiving job seekers allowances.

Noted.

4. Non Domestic Rates Relief: Rural Settlements

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services on new powers to relieve non-domestic rates for certain properties in rural settlements.

The Local Government and Rating Act, 1997 requires that each Local Authority must compile and maintain a rural settlement list which is available for public inspection between January and March. A draft list of rural settlements was appended to the report. The Act also provides for mandatory relief of 50% of non-domestic rates on certain post offices and general stores with a rateable value of less than £5,000 in rural settlements.

However, in view of the complexities of the Discretionary Relief Scheme and given the current constraints on the Council's budget it is not considered appropriate to introduce discretionary relief of rates for 1998/99. It was suggested that the Director of Financial Services report further on the policies adopted by other Authorities in this regard and on any representations from rural communities, trade associations and concerned individual rate payers, when submitting the rural settlement list for 1999/2000 for approval.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the draft list of rural settlements appended to the report; (b) that consideration be given to the possible inclusion of Longbar and Glengarnock in the draft list of rural settlements; (c) that the final list of rural settlements for 1998/99 be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee following consultation; and (d) that the Director of Financial Services report to a future meeting on the introduction of discretionary schemes for the relief or reduction of non-domestic rates.

5. Future of Authorities Buying Consortium

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the proposed review of the current Minute of Agreement of the Authorities Buying Consortium involving the commitment of the Council to membership and funding beyond 31 March 1998.

The current Minute of Agreement commits the twelve Councils who form the Consortium to membership and financial support until 31 March. A value for money review was recently commissioned by the Authorities Buying Consortium Joint Committee which highlighted a number of significant advantages enjoyed by the Consortium and confirmed that all Councils are showing savings and cost avoidance benefits of approximately 200%. As a result of the application of balances, premium recharge and other income the requisition for North Ayrshire will reduce from the 1997/98 figure of £72,557 to £48,408 for 1998/99, a saving of £24,149. The requisition figure is likely to reduce in future years as premium charge is applied thereby transferring relatively more burden to the users.

The Joint Committee has therefore requested that all Councils commit themselves to membership of the Authorities Buying Consortium after 31 March 1998 subject to various conditions as detailed in the report.

After discussion the Committee agreed (a) to continue the Council's membership and funding of the Authorities Buying Consortium after 1998 and subject to the conditions specified by the Consortium that a new Minute of Agreement be prepared to reflect the new conditions; and (b) that in the meantime the Consortium continue its operations in accordance with the existing Minute of Agreement.

6. Standing List of Contractors for Building and Related Works

Submitted report by the Architectural Services Manager on a proposal for the adoption of an Ayrshire-wide Standing List of Contractors for Building and Related Works.

Discussions among officers of the 3 Ayrshire Councils on the preparation of a new Approved List of Contractors has shown that such preparation would involve a considerable amount of duplicated work. It was therefore considered that an Ayrshire-wide Approved List would prove beneficial to each of the Authorities as the costs of preparing the List would be shared equally. East and South Ayrshire Councils have now formally agreed to this proposal. Agreement has been reached on an appropriate press advertisement, application form and on the vetting procedures to be used by each Authority. After completion, the operation of the approved list of contractors will be for each individual Authority to determine and in the event that North Ayrshire Council agree to adopt the Ayrshire-wide approved list of contractors for building and related works in accordance with the requirements of the Council's Standing Orders for Contracts, a final version of the list will be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee for approval.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the initiative to develop and Ayrshire-wide Standing List of Contractors for Building and Related Works; and (b) that the completed list be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee for final approval.

7. IT Print Services

Submitted report by the Information Technology Services Manager on progress on the installation of print services to replace Caird Centre operations and on support for the implementation of the Unified Benefits Council Tax and Rents systems.

The payroll and creditors systems have been successfully transferred from the Caird Centre to Cunninghame House at a total cost of £32,700 with ongoing maintenance costs of £15,000 and accommodation works of £20,000 to support the additional equipment storage and air conditioning requirements.

Four companies have submitted bids for the production of Council Tax notices, benefit application forms, voucher payment books and reminder/recovery documents. The lowest bid is that from MR Microrite with an annual charge of £28,852 plus one-off costs of £800.

Options have also been considered on the cost of providing print requirements and it is considered that it would be most appropriate for the Council to adopt a print strategy which affords most flexibility and value for money by out-sourcing the bulk printing to MR Microrite and continuing to undertake standard print runs in-house. Budget provision has already been made within the current years capital programme for the one-off costs involved and provision made within next year's revenue budgets for ongoing costs.

The Committee agreed to approve the appointment of MR Microrite as the Council's third party printer for bulk and specialist printing services.

8. Minutes

(a) Support Services (Appeals) Sub-Committee

Submitted the annexed reports (Appendix SS1) being the Minutes of the meetings of the Support Services (Appeals) Sub-Committee held on 19 December 1997 and 16 January 1998.

Noted.

(b) Council Tax Review Board

Submitted the annexed reports (Appendix SS2) being the Minutes of the meetings of the

Council Tax Review Board held on 19 December 1997 at 2.00 p.m. and 3.00 p.m.

Noted.

(c) Special JCC (APT & C Staffs), (Manual and Craft Workers) and (Teaching Staff) Meeting

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix SS3) being the Minutes of the Special JCC (APT & C Staffs), (Manual and Craft Workers) and (Teaching Staff) Meeting held on 12 December 1997.

Noted.

9. National Joint Council Circulars and National Agreements: Amendments to Conditions of Service

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on proposals for the adoption and implementation of amendments to conditions of service in respect of (i) APT & C Staff and Manual Workers First Aid Allowances; and (ii) Chief Officials Residential Training Courses, Out of Pocket Expenses and Rates of Subsistence Allowances. Agreement has been reached nationally on these.

The Committee agreed to approve these amendments.

10. Beith Town Centre: 6 Eglinton Street

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on a Compulsory Purchase Order for property at 6 Eglinton Street, Beith.

The Committee agreed to make a Compulsory Purchase Order in respect of the property at 6 Eglinton Street, Beith, in the terms indicated in the report.

11. Kilwinning: Abbey Park

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on a Compulsory Purchase Order for property at Abbey Park, Kilwinning.

The Committee agreed (a) to make a Compulsory Purchase Order in respect of the property at Abbey Park, Kilwinning in the terms indicated in the report; and (b) that concurrently the Principal Estates Officer be authorised to negotiate terms for the voluntary acquisition of Abbey Park, Kilwinning.

12. Irvine: Former Nursery at Haysholm: Proposed Development

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the future use of the former nursery at Haysholm, Irvine, owned by Irvine Common Good

The Committee agreed to (a) the disposal of the site for development; (b) authorise a site investigation survey (i) to ascertain the condition of the ground to ensure its suitability for development; and (ii) to identify the most appropriate access route to the site; and (c) instruct the Legal Services Manager to submit a further report to Committee on the arrangements for disposal.

13. Stevenston No. 13 Housing Action Areas for Demolition: 43/49 New Street

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the purchase of land and building at 43/49 New Street, Stevenston extending to 767.27m.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Legal Services Manager to proceed with the

purchase of the land and building at 43/49 New Street, Stevenston extending to 767.27m from Messrs. R.T. Evans and Son.

14. Seamill: Former Toilet Block beside Waterside Inn

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the proposed disposal of the former toilet block located between the Waterside Hotel and the adjacent caravan park at Seamill and extending to 0.048 acres or thereby.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Legal Services Manager to proceed with the disposal of the former toilet block on terms and conditions provisionally agreed with AM-EX (American Exports) Ltd.

15. West Kilbride: Hunterston Road: Ground at West Kilbride Primary School

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the proposed disposal of 195m or thereby of ground situated along the south eastern boundary of West Kilbride Primary School.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Legal Services Manager to proceed with the disposal of the ground on terms and conditions provisionally agreed with Mr. Neil Jack of 14 Hunterston Road, West Kilbride.

16. Dalry: Unit 6 Bridgend Industrial Estate; Kilbirnie: Unit 1 Riverside Place; and Stevenston: Unit 6 Portland Place

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the lease of Unit 6 Bridgend Industrial Estate, Dalry; Unit 1 Riverside Place, Kilbirnie; and Unit 6 Portland Place, Stevenston, previously agreed by the Chair as a matter of urgency.

The Committee agreed to homologate the decision of the Chair to approve the leases on the terms and conditions provisionally agreed by the Legal Services Manager.

17. Irvine: 117 Bank Street: Former Clinic

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the proposed disposal of superiority for the site at 117 Bank Street, Irvine.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Legal Services Manager to proceed with the disposal of superiority of 117 Bank Street, Irvine to Ayrshire and Arran Community Health Care NHS Trust, in accordance with the provisionally agreed terms and conditions.

18. Irvine: Area of Land at Second Avenue

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the sale of the Council's interest in land at Second Avenue, Irvine.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Legal Services Manager to proceed with the sale of land at Second Avenue, Irvine to Auto Electrical Services (Irvine) Limited, in accordance with the provisionally agreed terms.

19. Irvine: Harbour Street: Land to the east of "The Keys" Public House

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the proposed sale of land surplus to requirements to the east of "The Keys" Public House, Harbour Street, Irvine.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Legal Services Manager to proceed to advertise the

land at Harbour Street, Irvine for sale on the open market.

20. Irvine: Meadowhead: Request to Declare Land Surplus to Requirements

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the proposed sale of land surplus to requirements at Meadowhead, Irvine.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Legal Services Manager to proceed to advertise the land at Meadowhead, Irvine for sale on the open market, for industrial development.

21. Dreghorn: Corsehillmount Road: Building and Associated Areas at the GEC Avery Ltd. Site: Request to Declare Land Surplus to Requirements

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the proposed disposal by sale of the Council's ground lease interest in the former GEC Avery Depot, Corsehillmount Road, Dreghorn.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Legal Services Manager to dispose of the Council's ground interest in the former GEC Avery Depot, Dreghorn to Mr. Gordon Stead of Mid Moncur Farm, Kilwinning.

22. Stevenston: Warner Street Childrens Home; and Irvine: Site at Boyle Street: Proposed Disposal

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the proposed disposal of properties at Warner Street Childrens Home, Stevenston and Boyle Street, Irvine.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Legal Services Manager to enter into negotiations with the District Valuer on behalf of Cunninghame Housing Association on the disposal of properties at Warner Street Childrens Home, Stevenston and Boyle Street, Irvine and report back on provisional terms agreed.

23. Commercial Services Directorate: Industrial Tribunal Decision

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on the outcome of an application to an Industrial Tribunal from an employee of the former Irvine Development Corporation.

Details were provided on the circumstances surrounding the application which was considered by an industrial tribunal on 12, 13 and 14 November 1997. The tribunal determined that the applicant be re-engaged in a post within the Landscape Management Division of North Ayrshire Council on a salary equivalent to Grade 9 on the New Town Salary Scales (£25,569 - £27,342). They also determined that the applicant should receive £32,177.50 in respect of loss of earnings from 31 December 1996 until 27 February 1998 subject to various deductions.

A further hearing has been arranged on 18 March 1998, to determine the level of award due to applicant after taking into account the deductions determined by the Tribunal.

The applicant has since indicated to the Tribunal that he is unable to attend the hearing arranged for 18 March 1998 and has requested that a further date be set. The Council has written to the Secretary of the Industrial Tribunal (Scotland) requesting a delay in the implementation of the decision until after the second hearing. A further report will be submitted to the Committee following the second hearing.

The Committee agreed (a) that the Personnel Services Manager submit a further report on this matter following the second hearing; (b) that appropriate steps be taken to ensure that Members are advised of the decisions of relevant future tribunals at the earliest possible opportunity; and (c) otherwise to note the position meantime.

The Meeting ended at 2.40 p.m.