

Property Services Committee
6 March 2007

Irvine, 6 March 2007 - At a Meeting of the Property Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Samuel Taylor, John Bell, Gordon Allison, Ian Clarkson, Drew Duncan, Jane Gorman, Margaret McDougall, Elizabeth McLardy, Margaret Munn, David O'Neill, John Reid, Nan Wallace and Richard Wilkinson.

In Attendance

T. Orr, Corporate Director, Olga Clayton, Head of Housing, R. Small, Head of Roads, J. Currie, Head of Cleansing, Grounds Maintenance and Transport and J. Paul, Head of Technical Services, C. Nelson, Head of Catering and Cleaning, K Sillars, Head of Building Services (Property Services); K. MacDonald, Finance Manager (Finance); J. Stevenson, Communications Officer and M. Anderson and P. Shiach, Corporate Support Officer (Chief Executive's).

Chair

Councillor Taylor in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Stewart Dewar and Margie Currie

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 21 November 2006, copies of which were previously circulated, were confirmed.

2. Revenue Budget 2006/07: Budgetary Control

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) on the budgetary control position for Property Services at the end of January 2007 and projections for financial year 2006/07.

Noted

3. Service Performance Reports

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on 6 month performance reports for each of the main services areas.

The report set out, in Appendices A to G, the performance highs and lows, and the immediate priorities for each of the Service areas with the appendices giving details of Service Performance Reports for Building Services, Catering Service, Cleaning Service, Cleansing, Grounds Maintenance, Cemeteries and Transports Services, Housing Services, Roads Services and Technical Services.

The appropriate Heads of Service responded to questions from Members on aspects of their Service performance reports.

Noted.

5. Strategic Service Statements 2007-10

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on the Strategic Service Statements 2007-10 for the Property Services group as a whole and for each of its constituent services.

Information was provided in Appendices A to E of the report in relation to strategic service statements for the Property Services group as a whole and strategic service priorities for Cleansing, Grounds Maintenance, Cemeteries and Transport Services, Housing Services, Roads Services and Technical Services.

The Corporate Director and Heads of Service responded to questions from Members and provided clarification on the information contained within the Service Statements.

Noted

6. North Ayrshire Common Housing Register

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on progress with the North Ayrshire Common Housing Register and the proposed establishment of a Task Force to manage application registration.

In terms of Section 8 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, the Scottish Ministers have the power to require local authorities to set up Common Housing Registers (CHRs) for their own stock and that of Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in their areas.

The Committee previously approved the submission of a bid for funding in partnership with the 3 local Housing Associations, with the Council being awarded £50,000 in years 2004/05 and 2005/06, for the development of the CHR.

The Committee agreed to approve the setting up of the task force and the Council's financial contribution to continue the development of a joint Common Housing Register database.

7. A71: Replacement of Bailey Bridge

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on the finalisation of the design parameters for the replacement structure and associated roadworks.

In October 2006, the Committee agreed that a public exhibition be undertaken prior to finalising options in relation to a replacement structure for the Bailey Bridge.

Following the exhibition, the preferred option was identified as Option 4 of the development brief, comprising of two sloping steel arches forming a saltire.

A request to the Irvine Bay Regeneration Company for funding to upgrade the standard of the link road was unsuccessful, and consequently the project will consist of a single carriageway road link 7.3m wide with 1m edge strips either side and a bridge capable of carrying the overall 9.3m road width and two 2m footways. A list of potential designers is currently being prepared and the design services contract for the final bridge design will be tendered shortly.

Roads Services will investigate improvements to the capacities of the Merryvale and Milgarholm Roundabouts to reduce queuing and delays at peak periods.

The construction of the bridge and associated roadworks is a specific scheme included in the current Capital Plan. Further roadworks to improve the roundabouts will be funded from the general allocation for road improvements in a future capital programme.

Noted.

8. Irvine Railway Station: Park and Ride Facilities

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on the current position in relation to the construction of new car parking areas at Irvine Railway Station.

In August 2006, a report of a feasibility study into parking at Irvine Station, was submitted to the Committee and further investigation was undertaken on the two site recommended for development.

While the larger of the two sites is the subject of on-going discussions involving North Ayrshire Council, Strathclyde Partnership for Travel (SPT) and Network Rail, the use of part of the site owned by the Scottish Maritime Museum Board at the Linthouse Building as a park and ride car park has been agreed. Works to form a new access from Harbour Road, upgrade the parking area to accommodate 98 parking spaces and construct a pedestrian link to the station are being undertaken by Roads Services during the current financial year with funding obtained from SPT.

The possibility of extending the initial Maritime Museum car park onto adjacent unused ground owned by the Council is currently being investigated. The proposal would provide a further 70 spaces, with construction planned for the 2007-08 programme.

Further funding will be sought from SPT for the 2007-08 works, failing which the scheme will be considered for the Council's Capital Programme.

The Committee agreed that the Head of Roads meet with Strathclyde Partnership for Transport to discuss the management of the car park as a park and ride facility.

9. Roads Management and Maintenance Revenue Budget Programme 2007/2008

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on proposed Roads Management and Maintenance Revenue Budget Programme of works for financial year 2007/2008.

In terms of Section (1) of the Roads (Scotland) act 1984, the Council is responsible for the management and maintenance of its public roads, with expenditure funded from the Revenue Budget.

In this regard, a programme of works, estimated at approximately £1.35m, has been proposed, details of which were contained in appendices to the report

The Committee agreed to approve the Roads Management and Maintenance Revenue Budget programme for 2007/08 as detailed in the report.

10. Dalry Primary School: Provision of a Synthetic Multi Usage Games Pitch

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on the proposed provision of a synthetic multi usage games pitch at Dalry Primary School.

As part of a wider funding package for sports facilities in North Ayrshire, Big Lottery Funding, amounting to 80% of construction costs, has been awarded for a Multi Usage Games Pitch at Dalry Primary School.

In order to secure this funding, the Council requires, by June 2007, to have in place an accepted contract for the works.

In accordance with paragraph 7.6 of the Council's Standing Orders Relating to Contracts, it was proposed that the Corporate Director (Property Services) be authorised to negotiate a contract with G Thornton (Contracts) Limited, as an extension to similar contracts which are currently being undertaken in Ardrossan and Irvine Royal Academies and are due to be completed in May 2007.

Provision for the Council element of the funding is contained within the General Services Capital Programme.

The Committee agreed (a) to authorise the Corporate Director (Property Services) to negotiate an extension to an existing contract for the construction of synthetic multi usage games pitches to include Dalry Primary School; and (b) that the negotiated terms be reported to an future appropriate Committee.

11. Closing Orders

11.1 Suspension of Closing Order: Stevenston: 58 Boglemart Street

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on the proposed suspension of the Closing Order on the house at 58 Boglemart Street, Stevenston.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Suspension of a Closing Order on the property at 58 Boglemart Street, Stevenston.

11.2 Revocation of Closing Order: Stevenston: 65 Boglemart Street

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on the proposed revocation of the Closing Order on the property at 65 Boglemart Street, Stevenston.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Revocation of a Closing Order on the property at 65 Boglemart Street, Stevenston.

12. Homelessness

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on proposals to ensure that the Council meets its statutory obligations in relation to homelessness.

The Homelessness Etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 sets the framework for the abolition of Priority Need by 2012 and the Scottish Executive has now set Local Authorities interim targets for 2009.

In order to achieve the interim target for Priority Need by 2009, it is proposed that the Priority Need categories be extended to include any homeless person who:-

- has a medical issue;
- is supported by the Social Services Criminal Justice Team;
- has statutory access/custody of children; or
- is either under the age of 25 or over 46.

The number of offers made to homeless applicants would also increase to two in line with all other applicants. However, the policy will not be implemented until an impact assessment of the effect of the expansion of Priority Need categories is carried out. It is proposed that this review is carried out after a period of six months and, subject to the outcome, the policy of providing two offers could then be introduced on a phased basis.

In North Ayrshire, there is currently a disparity between void levels and demand for housing, particularly in Irvine and Largs. It is proposed, therefore, that a formal "Private Sector Leasing Scheme" be piloted in the Garnock Valley and Irvine areas to increase the availability of housing. It is recommended that the Council lease Private Sector properties for a period of up to 20 years, with a 6-month termination clause built in. The cost of the lease would be negotiated on a local basis, varying across areas to reflect the private market in each area and subject to a set upper limit. Given that landlords would have no responsibilities in terms of response repairs, management, maintenance and voids, it is recommended that a sum, based on the average cost of these items to a standard Council property, would be deducted from the negotiated rent level.

The rent charged to the tenant will reflect the level of rent paid out by the Council, with an additional service charge added where the property is to be used as temporary accommodation. The Council will have the ability to offer a Scottish Secure Tenancy to prospective tenants, although this will not extend to a right to buy.

A review of the current Registered Social Landlord (RSL) nomination agreement would also be undertaken, with the aim of achieving parity in the contribution made to housing homeless people by all social landlords in North Ayrshire. Currently, only one RSL is meeting the target in terms of lets to homeless applicants.

The Committee agreed to (a) extend the Priority Need categories; (b) the establishment of a Private Leasing pilot within the Irvine and Largs area; (c) a phased increase of offers of permanent housing from one to two for homeless applicants in line with all other applicants; and (d) a review of the current housing association nomination agreement.

13. Allocation Policy for Redburn Gypsy/Travellers Site Pitches

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on a proposed policy for the allocation of pitches at the Redburn Gypsy/Travellers Site, Irvine.

The Council owns and manages the Redburn Gypsy/Traveller site at Kilwinning Road, Irvine. The site has 16 pitches for caravans, each with an amenity unit comprising a kitchen, toilet, shower and storage area.

In September 2005, Communities Scotland carried out a thematic inspection of services for gypsies/travellers and made recommendations in terms of a review of the Council's allocation policy. As a result, a proposed allocation policy and guidance notes have been drafted.

The Committee agreed to approve the Allocation Policy and Guidance Notes for the Redburn Travelling Persons' Site set out in the appendix to the report.

14. Saltcoats Multi-Storey Flats: Overcladding

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on issues associated with overcladding of the Saltcoats multi-storey flats.

A number of flats in the Saltcoats multi-storey blocks have experienced difficulties with water penetration. The High Flats Residents' Association has asked the Council to overclad the blocks as the ultimate solution to this problem. In addition, a specialist report has confirmed the need for major repairs to the windows and the Council's flats have, therefore, been included in the 2007/08 Window Replacement Programme.

The Saltcoats blocks comprise 94 flats, 31 of which are currently in private ownership. This high proportion of privately-owned flats is a major obstacle to achieving the overcladding due to the costs involved. For a structural render overcladding system, the cost is estimated at £11,000 per flat and this cost is likely to double if a rainscreen system is instead required.

Before a final decision can be made on overcladding, it is proposed that each owner is consulted on their ability and willingness to meet their respective shares and that potential grant assistance is calculated on the basis of each owner's financial circumstances. The outcome of the consultation exercise will be reported to Committee, together with the funding implications for the Housing Revenue Account and Private Sector Grant assistance. It will also be necessary to defer window replacement works while the matter of overcladding is clarified.

The Residents' Association will be included in the consultation exercise.

The Committee agreed (a) that a consultation exercise be undertaken with the private owners of flats in the Saltcoats multi-storey blocks regarding the overcladding of the blocks; (b) that the results of the consultation and other relevant issues be reported to a future appropriate Committee; and (c) to defer the planned window replacement until a satisfactory outcome has been reached in relation to the overcladding exercise.

15. Tenders

15.1 Irvine: James Crescent: Young Persons' Residential Unit

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on tenders received for the construction of a Young Persons' Residential Unit at James Crescent, Irvine.

Tenders were invited from a short list of contractors selected from the Council's approved list and in accordance with the relevant Code of Procedures. An abstract of offers was circulated at the meeting and the lowest offer was from McLaughlin Construction, Ardrossan, in the amount of £1,273,299.70.

The Committee agreed to accept the tender from McLaughlin Construction, Ardrossan, in the amount of £1,273,299.70, to be met from within the General Services Capital Programme.

15.2 Irvine: Cunninghame House: Relocation of IT Service

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on tenders received for the relocation of the IT Services to the ground floor of Cunninghame House, Irvine.

Tenders were invited from a short list of contractors selected from the Council's approved list and in accordance with the relevant Code of Procedures. An abstract of offers was circulated at the meeting. The lower offer was from Clark Contracts, Paisley which, following a reduction exercise, was revised by Addendum Bill to £1,221,617.36.

The Committee agreed to accept the tender from Clark Contract, Paisley, in the amount of £1,221,617.36, to be met from within the General Services Capital Programme.

The meeting ended at 3.15 p.m.