



**NORTH AYRSHIRE**  
COUNCIL

Cunninghame House,  
Irvine.

7 March 2013

**Cabinet**

You are requested to attend a Meeting of the above mentioned Committee of North Ayrshire Council to be held in the Council Chambers, Cunninghame House, Irvine on **TUESDAY 12 MARCH 2013** at **2.30 p.m.** to consider the undernoted business.

Yours faithfully

Elma Murray

Chief Executive

**1. Declarations of Interest**

Members are requested to give notice of any declarations of interest in respect of items of business on the Agenda.

**2. Minutes (Page 7)**

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Cabinet held on 26 February 2013 will be signed in accordance with paragraph 7 (1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (enclosed).

**GENERAL BUSINESS FOR DECISION**

**3. Digital Services Strategy (Page 21)**

Submit report by (Finance & Corporate Support) on the new Digital Services Strategy and the progress on implementation and receive presentation by the Customer Services Manager (copy enclosed).

- 4. Household Survey (Page 55)**  
Submit report by Chief Executive on options for conducting a household survey (copy enclosed).
- 5. Montgomerie Park, Irvine – Masterplan Review (Page 71)**  
Submit report by Corporate Director (Development & Environment) regarding a review of the approved Masterplan and associated strategies for the delivery and funding of development sites at Montgomerie Park (copy enclosed).
- 6. Upper Garnock Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme Progress Report (Page 81)**  
Submit report by Corporate Director (Development & Environment) on the progress of the development of the Upper Garnock Flood Protection Scheme (copy enclosed).
- 7. Write off of Tenant Rent Arrears (Page 87)**  
Submit report by (Finance & Corporate Support) on tenant rent arrears and court costs and the write-off irrecoverable amounts (copy enclosed).
- 8. Proposed Tree and Woodlands Management Policy (Page 91)**  
Submit report by Corporate Director (Development & Environment) in respect of a Tree and Woodland Management Policy (copy enclosed).
- 9. Water Safety Policy (Page 107)**  
Submit report by Corporate Director (Development & Environment) in respect of a Water Safety Policy (copy enclosed).

#### **GENERAL BUSINESS FOR INFORMATION**

- 10. Welfare Reform (Page 125)**  
Submit report by Corporate Director (Finance & Corporate Support) on the progress made against the welfare reform action plan (copy enclosed).
- 11. Bridgegate Streetscape Enhancement Project - Procurement of Street Art (Page 153)**  
Submit report by Corporate Director (Finance & Corporate Support) of the actions taken to award a contract for street art at Bridgegate (copy enclosed).

#### **CONTRACT APPROVAL**

- 12. ICT Infrastructure Strategic Review - Managed WAN Services (Page 157)**  
Submit report by Corporate Director (Finance & Corporate Support) of the results of the tender and present a recommendation for award of contract (copy enclosed).

## **MINUTES FOR INFORMATION**

**13. Environment and Infrastructure Policy Board : Minutes of Meeting held on 18 February 2013 (Page 167)**

Submit report by Corporate Director (Development & Environment) on the minutes of the Environment and Infrastructure Policy Board held on 18 February 2013 (copy enclosed).

**14. Urgent Items**

Any other items which the Chair considers to be urgent.



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## Cabinet

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Sederunt:

**Elected Members**

Willie Gibson (Chair)  
Alan Hill (Vice-Chair)  
Marie Burns  
Anthea Dickson  
John Ferguson  
Tony Gurney  
Alex McLean

Chair:

Attending:

Apologies:

Meeting Ended:



Cabinet  
26 February 2013

**IRVINE, 26 February 2013** - At a Meeting of the Cabinet of North Ayrshire Council at 2.30 p.m.

**Present**

Willie Gibson, Alan Hill, Marie Burns, Anthea Dickson, John Ferguson, Tony Gurney and Alex McLean, for Education Business, M. Fraser, E. Higon and Very Reverend M. Canon McManus (Church Representatives), G. Smith (Teaching Representative) and D. Hawthorn and N. McDonald (Pupil Representatives).

**Also Present**

Alex Gallagher and Peter McNamara.

**In Attendance**

E. Murray, Chief Executive; C. Kirk, Corporate Director, M. Armstrong, Head of Service Development, M. Docherty, Head of Education (3-18), L. Crone, Headteacher (Ardeer Primary School) and F. Rodman, Quality Improvement Officer (Education and Skills); I. Colvin, Corporate Director and O. Clayton, Head of Community Care and Housing (Social Services and Health); L. Friel, Corporate Director, G. Macgregor, Head of HR and Organisational Development and T. Reaney, Procurement Manager (Finance and Corporate Support); C. Hatton, Corporate Director (Development and Environment), K. Yeomans, Head of Development Planning, J. Smith, Senior Manager, Development Planning and A. Laurenson, Team Manager (Regeneration); K. Dyson, Communications Officer and M. Anderson, Committee Services Officer (Chief Executive's Service).

**Also In Attendance**

L. Kelly, Head of Policy, Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board.

**Chair**

Councillor Gibson in the Chair.

**1. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest by Members in terms of Standing Order 16 and Section 5 of the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

**2. Minutes**

The accuracy of the Minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 29 January 2013 and the Special Meeting held of 30 January 2013 was agreed and the Minutes signed in accordance with paragraph 7(1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

**3. Flexibility of P2/P3 Class Size**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Education and Skills) on flexibility in respect of class size maxima at P2/P3 level.

Current Scottish Government legislation provides for statutory maximum class sizes of 25 pupils in Primary 1 and 30 pupils in each of Primary 2 and Primary 3. The Council has adopted a policy further limiting the maximum pupil numbers in Primary 2 and 3 classes to 25. This arrangement has worked well in most cases, but there have been occasions where the existing policy has resulted in capacity issues within primary schools.

Section 2 of the report set out some options available to overcome accommodation issues. The report recommended that, in exceptional circumstances, the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) be given delegated authority to allow a temporary increase in the class size maxima for certain Primary 2 and/or Primary 3 classes at particular schools. The requirement to operate within the Scottish Government's statutory class size maxima would remain.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the frequency with which it might be necessary to increase class sizes. Members received assurances that the authority to increase class sizes temporarily would be exercised only infrequently, in exceptional circumstances.

The Cabinet agreed that the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) be given delegated authority to increase class sizes at P2/P3 level beyond the levels set by current Council policy, such powers to be limited in their use to extenuating circumstances only.

#### **4. Vision for the Future of Education in North Ayrshire**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Education and Skills) on the outcome of the visionary exercise undertaken by the Attainment and Achievement Policy Board.

The Education Attainment and Achievement Policy Board identified that there should be a shared long-term vision for Education in North Ayrshire. All Members were invited to a workshop to identify and prioritise key areas. The outcome was subsequently discussed by the Policy Board and shared with headteachers, Parent Council representatives and the Youth Council. The proposed vision was set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the vision set out at Appendix 1 of the report.

#### **5. School and Nursery Inspections within North Ayrshire Council during the period January - December 2012**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Education and Skills) on the outcomes of inspection activity within Dalry and Brisbane Primary Schools and Brisbane Nursery Class in June 2012.



As part of their ongoing work, Her Majesty's Inspectors from Education Scotland, sample a range of secondary, special, primary and nursery education. The North Ayrshire schools and early years establishments inspected during this period were outlined at Appendix 1 to the report and the evaluations were provided at Appendix 2. The inspection reports arising from the inspections were discussed fully at the Dalry and Garnock Valley and West Kilbride Area Committee and North Coast Area Committee.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the following:-

- the value of presenting more detailed information on the outcome of inspections to the relevant Area Committee; and
- action to improve on the "Good" rating received by Brisbane Primary School for "Meeting Learning Needs".

Noted.

## **6. Cross Boundary Pre-School Education Places**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Education and Skills) on the current position concerning cross boundary pre-school education places.

In February 2012, the former Education Executive agreed that, for session 2012/13, the funding for free Early Years Education and Childcare would follow the child, such that, if a parent in North Ayrshire wished to attend an Early Years Centre in another authority for valid work or childcare reasons, then the funding would be paid to the partner centre in the other authority. The table at Section 2.8 outlined any charges to North Ayrshire, based on whether or not a reciprocal agreement with North Ayrshire continues to exist. The table at Section 2.10 detailed the number of children resident in another local authority area who access a place in North Ayrshire from August 2012 to December 2012.

The report proposed that, pending further national guidance, reciprocal arrangements continue with neighbouring authorities, where possible, and arrangements for accepting children from non-reciprocating authorities be further developed.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the number of authorities in Scotland which no longer have in place reciprocal arrangements.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the continuation of the ongoing interim procedures for cross boundary pre-school education places, pending the issue of further national guidance.

## **7. Education and Skills Validated Self-Evaluation (VSE)**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Education and Skills) on the Validated Self-Evaluation undertaken by the Council and Education Scotland.

Validated Self-Evaluation (VSE) is a voluntary process of engagement between education authorities and Education Scotland that focuses on the quality of self-evaluation leading to improved outcomes for learners. On 2 August 2011, the former Education Executive agreed to undertake a Validated Self-Evaluation to examine the key themes within Education and Skills set out at Section 1.2 of the report.

The self-evaluation activity undertaken by the three thematic groups has now been completed. Education Scotland has produced a report which assesses the quality of self-evaluation, captures key strengths, capacity for improvement and areas for further development, as set out at Appendices 1-4. The key strengths identified within the Education Scotland report and the areas for further development, were summarised at Sections 2.2 and 2.3 of the report. The areas for further development have been built into the Service Plan for 2013/14 and improvements against the actions will be reported to the Cabinet in February 2014.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the time-consuming nature of the VSE exercise and the benefits arising from it.

The Cabinet agreed (a) to note the Validated Self-Evaluation; and (b) that the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) submit a report to the Cabinet in February 2014 on progress in respect of the areas for development.

## **8. Building Sustainable Learning Communities**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Education and Skills) on the restructuring of the Quality Improvement Service and the move to an integrated area based self-improving system approach to quality improvement.

The report proposed that 6.5 FTE quality improvement officer posts, together with the quality improvement manager post, be deleted and replaced with 4 locality focused senior managers, who will take a lead role in quality improvement, raising attainment and developing neighbourhood approaches in collaboration with Community Planning Partners. This proposal will generate a saving of £242,000 and is line with 2013/14 budget decisions.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the following:-

- the size of the St. Matthew's cluster; and
- the importance of seeking to better manage the transition from Primary School to Secondary School in terms of curriculum continuity.

The Cabinet agreed (a) to approve the implementation of the proposals, to delete 6.5 FTE quality improvement officer posts and the quality improvement manager post and replace them with 4 locality focused senior managers; and (b) that the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) consider what additional support may be required for the St. Matthew's cluster.

## **9. Largs Car Park - Proposed Increase in Parking Charges**

Submitted report by Chief Executive on an increase in the charge for the use of Largs Seafront Car Park, recommended by the North Coast Area Committee.

The revenue arising from charges levied at the Largs Seafront Car Park, less operating costs, is utilised to support local initiatives. The current charge of £2.00 per day for parking in Largs Seafront Car Park has remained static for a number of years and does not reflect rates charged at similar facilities in other areas. A rise in the charge for parking would increase the number and/or the extent of initiatives funded annually.

At its meeting held on 7 February 2013, the North Coast Area Committee considered a report by the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) on a proposed increase in the charge levied to park in Largs Seafront Car Park and agreed to recommend to the Cabinet an increase in the fee to £3.00 per day, or part thereof, with effect from 1 April 2013.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) approve an increase in the daily rate for Largs Car Park, from £2.00 per day to £3.00; and (b) note the arrangements for publicising the change.

## **10. Irvine Enterprise Area**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Development and Environment) on the activities at the Irvine Enterprise Area since its designation and on the preparation of a Business Plan.

Four Enterprise Areas (EAs) or Sectors have been designated by the Scottish Government, including a 'Life Sciences' EA for sites in Irvine, Moray, Highlands, Edinburgh and Midlothian. Appendix 1 illustrated the extent of the Irvine Life Sciences Enterprise Area and the availability of incentives in terms of Enhanced Capital Allowances and Business Rates relief.

The report provided an update of activity in relation to the Irvine Enterprise Area, including details of the incentives offered, the preparation of the Business Plan set out at Appendix 2 and confirmation of governance arrangements.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the following:-

- how the skills support work referred to in Section 4 of the Business Plan related to the wider approach to addressing skills shortages;
- the value of increasing the frequency with which the Advisory Board meets;
- the resource being offered by Scottish Enterprise on a project by project basis;
- the breakdown of Management and Promotion costs referred to at Section 2.2 of the Business Plan; and
- the role of GSK on the Advisory Board.

The Cabinet agreed (a) to note the content of the Irvine Enterprise Area Business Plan and the implementation work, as set out at Appendix 2 and within the report; (b) to approve the proposals to develop and market the Irvine Enterprise Area as set out in the Business Plan; (c) to assign responsibility for the implementation of the Business Plan to the Irvine Bay Regeneration Company to be managed through the Irvine Bay Board and Delivery Team, supported by an Advisory Board consisting of an Elected Member, Senior Officers and key external stakeholders; (d) to recommend to Council that the Economy and Employment Portfolio-holder be appointed to the Advisory Board; (e) that annual updates on the implementation of the Business Plan be submitted to the Cabinet; (f) that the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) submit a report to the Economy and Employment Policy Board on the wider approach to skills support; and (g) that further information be provided to Members on the breakdown of Management and Promotion costs referred to at Section 2.2 of the Business Plan.

### **11. Demolition Order - Craigspark Farm, Craigspark, Ardrossan**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on the condition of the above property at Craigspark Farm, Craigspark, Ardrossan and seek approval to serve a Demolition Order.

Under Section 115 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, North Ayrshire Council retains the statutory authority to serve Demolition Orders where properties fail to meet the recognised tolerable standard. On inspection, at the request of the owner, the property at Craigspark Farm was found to be in very poor condition, with penetrating dampness throughout the property and was deemed to be below the Tolerable Standard as defined by Section 86 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987.

The Cabinet agreed, given the condition of the property at Craigspark Farm, Craigspark, Ardrossan, to approve the serving of a Demolition Order in terms of Section 115 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987.

### **12. Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009: Update**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Development and Environment) on progress with the implementation of the Council's response to the statutory obligations within the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009.

Appendices 1 and 2 to the report contained a letter from the Scottish Government on the Act and a work plan for its implementation, respectively. A Minute of Agreement, set out at Appendix 3, has been prepared by all participating authorities establishing the roles, responsibilities and funding arrangements for the joint arrangements for the Local Plan District (LPD) partnership. The FRM Action Plan was set out at Appendix 4.

Section 2 of the report provided information on a number of studies and surveys being progressed across North Ayrshire to investigate proactively known flood risk areas and to seek solutions to flood risks in various communities.

The Cabinet agreed (a) to note the progress in taking forward the requirements of the FRM Act; (b) to note the Minute of Agreement set out at Appendix 3, which proposes to create a Local Plan District Steering Group, Project Management Group and Project Teams; and (c) to recommend to Council that the Portfolio Holder for the Environment be the Council's representative on the Steering Group; and (d) that a Senior Officer be appointed to the Project Management Group and Project Teams.

### **13. Operational Review: Ayrshire Joint Planning Unit (AJPU)**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Development and Environment) on the findings of the operational review of the Ayrshire Joint Planning Unit (AJPU) by Officers of the three Ayrshire Councils, and to seek agreement of the next steps.

Officers undertook an operational review during 2012 to establish whether the AJPU remained the best model for joint working on planning matters for the three Councils, following the impact of legislative changes, the agreement of a previous Voluntary Early Retirement (VER) request of one member of staff, and a further application for VER from another staff member. The 3 options considered as part of the review were highlighted at Section 2.3 of the report. Option 2 (disbanding the unit and allowing the team members to return to their employing Councils) was recommended as offering the best value in terms of generating savings, while retaining each Council's ability to discharge key functions.

The Cabinet agreed (a) to disband the Ayrshire Joint Planning Unit; and (b) that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Cabinet on (i) the resources required to deliver the statutory functions previously undertaken by the Ayrshire Joint Planning Unit and (ii) the opportunities for joint working to progress any cross-boundary matters.

### **14. Review of Planning Fees**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Development and Environment) on the Scottish Government's proposal to increase planning fees by 20% in April 2013.

If approved, the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2013 would result in an increase in planning application fees by approximately 20% from April 2013. The Local Government and Planning Minister has stated that "The increase is designed to allow authorities to improve performance, while keeping overall planning fees in Scotland lower than the English equivalent."

The existing scale of fees was attached at Appendix 1 to the report. Historic fee income over the 2 year period (2010-12) is approximately £410,000 per annum. A 20% increase would, therefore, realise additional fee income of £82,000 annually. The report proposed the creation of a new post of Graduate Planner to increase the Council's capacity to response to the expected performance improvements, provide succession planning within the service, and create local employment and development opportunity.

The Cabinet agreed (a) to note the increase in planning fees proposed by the Local Government and Planning Minister; (b) subject to the increase receiving the support of Scottish Government, to approve the creation of a new post of Graduate Planner; and (c) that any surplus income be considered as part of the Council's future budget setting exercise.

## **15. Kilbirnie Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Development and Environment) on the award of funding from Historic Scotland towards a Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme for Kilbirnie.

At its meeting on 21 August 2012, the Cabinet approved the submission of a bid to Historic Scotland for a Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) in Kilbirnie. Following the success of the bid, an award of £500,000 has been made available by Historic Scotland over a 5-year period starting in April 2013, supplemented by a contribution of £500,000 by the Council, and contributions from private property owners. The focus of the CARS will be the improvement of the built environment and public realm within the Kilbirnie Conservation Area, with the Knox Institute and Walker Hall as priority buildings. The main components of the CARS and indicative budget costs were set out at Section 2.3 of the report.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the importance of undertaking separate work in relation to the future use of key buildings.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) note the success of the bid and proposed next steps; and (b) delegate consideration of the formal bid criteria to the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) and the Head of Democratic and Administration Services.

## **16. Residual Waste Treatment**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Development and Environment) on the progress in securing long-term treatment facilities for residual waste.

The respective partner Councils (North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire, East Dumbartonshire and this Council) have all confirmed agreement to the Inter-Authority Agreement to procure a long-term solution for the treatment of residual waste with the Clyde Valley Partnership. It is anticipated that the Partner Councils will require facilities to treat 190,000 tonnes of residual waste per annum, of which North Ayrshire Council will contribute 34,000 tonnes.

The procurement exercise will utilise the EU Competitive Dialogue process. A project timetable was set out in a table at Section 2.3 of the report and culminates with a target service commencement date of December 2019.

Noted.

## **17. Joint Commissioning Strategy for Older People - 10-Year Vision for Joint Services**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Social Services and Health) on the Joint Commissioning Strategy for Older People and the Pan Ayrshire 10-year Joint Commissioning Vision.

The 10-Year Vision for Joint Services - Reshaping Care for Older People is now in draft form and was set out at Appendix 1 to the report. It will be circulated as part of the extensive communication and engagement exercise which will continue until the end of February 2013. Appendix 2 to the report contained the Council's 3-year plan for 2008-11, the key priorities of which were highlighted at Section 2.11. The report also identified the following key priorities for the next 18 months:-

- reducing hospital and care home unplanned admissions;
- falls prevention and management;
- maximising recovery in the community;
- increasing support for unpaid carers;
- medicine Review;
- a Neighbourhood Planning Approach to utilise community assets;
- developing care home resource as part of a neighbourhood planning approach; and
- improving engagement with Primary Care, particularly GPs.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the following:-

- the benefits of a neighbourhood planning approach in the delivery of support for older people; and
- the need to seek to raise public awareness of positive examples of the delivery of care locally.

Noted.

## **18. Responding to Demographic Change in North Ayrshire**

Submitted report by Chief Executive on demographic trends affecting North Ayrshire.

In October 2012, the Economy and Employment Policy Board considered the paper contained at Appendix 1 to the report, on "Responding to Demographic Change". The Board agreed that further research should be carried out in terms of the key drivers for population decline and migration to and from North Ayrshire, and that the paper should be submitted to the Cabinet with a recommendation that the Council should seek to increase the population of North Ayrshire.

Since the report was compiled, the first results from the 2011 Census have been published. This shows that the total population of North Ayrshire was 138,000, a slight improvement on previously published Scottish Government Mid Year Population Estimates. However, the analysis contained within the report remains accurate in as much as population is still forecast to decline significantly in the medium/long term and the structure of the population will change with increases in older age groups offset by falls in the number of young people.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the following:-

- the need to attract working and skilled people to North Ayrshire, to increase the economically active proportion of the population; and
- the importance of ensuring that the Council's policies aim to encourage an increase in the number of economically active people within North Ayrshire.

Noted.

## **19. Redstone Avenue, Kilwinning: Appointment of Contractor**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Social Services and Health) on the award of a construction contract for the development of 46 new general and particular needs housing at Redstone Avenue, Kilwinning.

Eight Contractor tenders were submitted and the three lowest tenders evaluated, as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report. Following all revisions, McTaggart Construction Ltd was identified as the organisation which submitted the lowest tender, citing construction contract costs of £4,816,600. This indicates an overall saving of £55,000 on the forecast budget requirement for this project. The report sought approval to retain this saving in the Council house building fund, to be used as funding for future projects.

The Cabinet agreed (a) to award of the construction contract, at a value of £4,816,600, to McTaggart Construction Ltd, for the construction of 46 new general and particular needs housing at Redstone Avenue, Kilwinning; and (b) that any savings realised through the tendering process be retained within the Council house building fund, to be used as funding for future building projects.

## **20. Modern Apprenticeship Training Providers**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on a proposal to invite tenders from training providers to support the expansion of the Modern Apprenticeship programme.

Following the expansion of the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) programme, the Council requires to procure external support for the provision of training to modern apprentices. The required formal tendering exercise would be for a 3-year contract period, with the option to extend for up to 2 years. The maximum annual budget for this external training provision is £60,000 (£180,000 over initial period of contract) and would be part-subsidised by Skills Development Scotland.



The Cabinet agreed to approve the issuing of a formal tender to support the expansion of the Modern Apprenticeship programme.

## **21. Home Care Management System - Tender Outcome**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on the results of the tender for a Home Care Management System and present a recommendation for award of contract.

A detailed specification was developed for a Home Care Management System and a formal tendering exercise undertaken on the basis of a 3-year contract commencing on 1 March 2013, with an option to extend for a further 5 years. Three bids were received and analysed, with further clarification obtained where required and scores determined against previously published evaluation criteria and weightings.

A tender outcome report and award recommendation was provided at Appendix 1 to the report. It was proposed that Care Monitoring 2000 is awarded the contract. The estimated total value of the overall contract (including any potential extensions) is £631,040. One off capital costs account for £53,600 of this with annual revenue costs of £72,180 thereafter. Funds have been set aside in the Change Fund to meet the capital cost, recurring costs will be met from efficiency savings.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the selection process in terms of quality over cost.

The Cabinet agreed to award the Home Care Management System contract to Care Monitoring 2000 as it achieved the best overall score based on the criteria and weightings.

## **22. Framework Agreements for External Wall Insulation (EWI)**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) to undertake a tender exercise to put in place framework agreements for the supply and installation of external wall insulation systems (EWI).

The Council has a requirement to put in place a contractual arrangement for the supply and installation of EWI. The annual value will be in the range of £2m-£3m (inclusive of external grant funding) for a period of 4 years. The Council currently has a framework agreement in place to undertake EWI works up to an annual value of £1 million. In order to be able to undertake works of a larger scale, framework agreements will require to be procured in accordance with EU procurement directives.

The report proposed that the contract requirements are advertised as a restricted tender on the basis of a three year framework agreement with the option to extend for a further one year thereafter. The work to be undertaken in year one of the contract would be awarded to the most economically advantageous tender. Future

years would be awarded on the basis of annual mini competitions and awarded to the lowest priced submission.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the commencement of a tender exercise to put in place framework agreements for EWI.

### **23. Contract for Gas Maintenance**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on a tender exercise to put in place a contract for gas maintenance (including emergency breakdown installations).

The Council has an ongoing requirement to have in place a contractual arrangement for gas maintenance (including emergency breakdown installation) within Council housing stock. The annual value of the contract is estimated to be £1.5m. The contract with the existing provider, Saltire, is now in its final extension period and new contract arrangements require to be in place by November 2013.

The report proposed a 2-stage open tender process on the basis of a 3-year term contract with the option of two additional 12 month extensions. The first stage will be a robust pre-qualification questionnaire. The second stage of the contract will assess which contractor is most economically advantageous.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the commencement of a tender exercise to put in place a contract for gas maintenance, including emergency breakdown installations.

### **24. South West Hub Territory Partnering Board : Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 December 2012**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on the Minutes of the Meeting of the South West Hub Territory Partnering Board held on 20 December 2012.

Noted.

### **25. Health and Social Care Policy Board : Minutes of Meeting held on 21 January 2013**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Social Services and Health) on the Minutes of the Health and Social Care Policy Board held on 21 January 2013.

Noted.

### **26. Finance and Corporate Support Policy Board : Minutes of Meeting held on 21 January 2013**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance and Corporate Support Policy Board held on 21 January 2013.

Noted.

**27. Education Attainment and Achievement Policy Board: Minutes of Meeting held on 28 January 2013**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Education and Skills) on the Minutes of the Meeting of the Education Attainment and Achievement Policy Board held on 28 January 2013.

Noted.

**28. Environment and Infrastructure and Economy and Employment Joint Policy Board : Minutes of Meeting held on 4 February 2013**

Submitted report by Corporate Director (Development and Environment) on the Minutes of the Environment and Infrastructure and Economy and Employment Policy Board held on 4 February 2013.

Noted.

The meeting ended at 4.05 p.m.



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## **NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **Agenda Item 3**

**12 March 2013**

#### **Cabinet**

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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Digital Services Strategy</b>
<b>Purpose:</b>	To inform the Cabinet of the new Digital Services Strategy and the progress on implementation.
<b>Recommendation:</b>	That the Cabinet (a) approves the Digital Services Strategy set out at Appendix 1; and (b) notes progress.

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#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Customer Services strategy, approved in 2011 outlined that the Council will make access to its services available through appropriate and cost effective channels, with the needs and preferences of its individual customers central to service delivery. The Council's website has a key role to play and feedback from customers, Elected Members and employees was that the existing site was not fit for purpose.
- 4.2 A project to review the existing website was approved by the Corporate Management Team (CMT) in March 2012 and Liverpool Direct Limited was engaged to provide support to the internal team. The scope of the project was to provide a new Digital Services Strategy which would outline the future direction for the Council and implement robust governance and quality management arrangements. A programme of workshops and individual meetings with key stakeholders were arranged to identify the key priorities and help shape the strategy.

#### **2. Current Position**

- 2.1 A Digital Services Strategy has been produced with consultation taking place with Managers across the Council. A copy of the Digital Services Strategy is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 The project to implement the new website is on track with the design and architecture in place and the vast majority of content re-written and approved. The new website will be delivered on 3 April 2013.

- 2.3 A communication plan is in place to inform the public of the new website and the effectiveness of this will be measured and reported back to Elected Members.

### **3. Proposals**

- 3.1 The Council will adopt a centralised approach to the management of the website with Customer Services taking the lead and working closely with IT and Communications.
- 3.2 Any online services will be designed around the customer and decisions will be based on evidence on demand and customer journey. The new website will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and regular analysis will be undertaken to encourage more customers to visit the site.
- 3.3 The Cabinet is invited to (a) approve the Digital Services Strategy set out at Appendix 1; and (b) note progress.

### **4. Implications**

#### Financial Implications

- 4.1 A business case for the re-development was in place which identified savings to be delivered within Customer Service as a result of less customers using the telephone to contact the Council. A process is in place to monitor the benefit of the new website and realise any savings. The funding for the re-development was from within the existing IT and Customer Service budgets.

#### Human Resource Implications

- 4.2 None

#### Legal Implications

- 4.3 None

#### Equality Implications

- 4.4 The new website will be fully tested to meet accessibility criteria and an Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out.

#### Environmental Implications

- 4.5 None

## Implications for Key Priorities

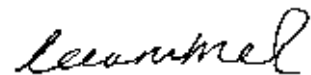
- 4.6 The new website and the Digital Services Strategy will support the key priorities through providing a more effective and efficient service, reducing the cost to deliver front-line services.

## 5. Consultations

- 5.1 The project team has consulted widely with workshops held with Elected Members, the Extended Corporate Management Team (ECMT) and managers from across the Council. Customer engagement has taken the form of meetings with young people and tenant groups and a customer survey. The output from all engagement activities has been analysed and has helped to shape the design and architecture of the new website.

## 6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The Digital Services Strategy provides clear direction for the future delivery of the website and other online services. A report on the success of the new website based on feedback from customers, employees and usage figures will be provided to Cabinet early in 2013-14.



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### Reference :

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### Background Papers

Customer Services Strategy

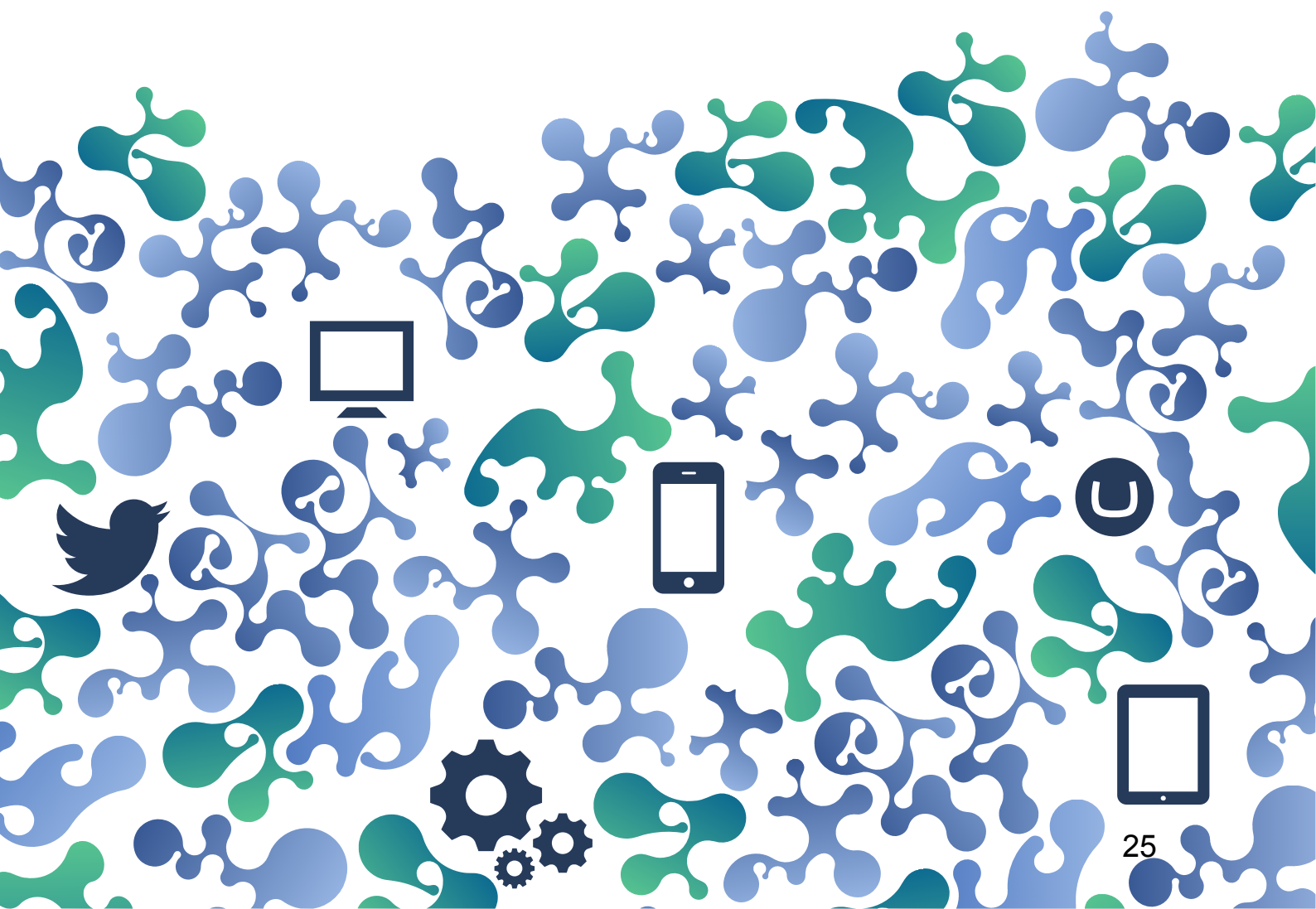






# North Ayrshire Council

## Digital Services Strategy



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## 1 Executive summary

More and more people are accessing service online via an increasingly diverse range of devices. For many, digital is the preferred option and customer expectations are high. The council must take digital seriously and resource it accordingly if it wishes to make savings and meet expectations.

# Vision

*“Provide efficient, **customer-focused** digital services via the devices and platforms our citizens prefer to use”*

# Approach

1. In everything we do, we **start with user needs**
2. We aim to give people what they want, without getting in the way
3. We **build** everything we do **so we can measure** it
4. Every choice we make is **backed with evidence**
5. Where we don't provide it, we **signpost**
6. The website is a living thing. We do, **iterate, then iterate again**
7. We are **building digital services, not websites**.

# Aims

1. **Deliver** customer-focused digital services
2. **Sustain** and improve
3. **Engage** and communicate
4. **Build** and maintain a flexible technical platform

# Key actions

1. Create a digital team and centralise content model
2. Adopt customer-focussed approach
3. Deliver new site
4. Implement robust management and governance

## 2 Introduction

This strategy has been authored by Liverpool Direct Limited in their capacity as consultants to North Ayrshire Council. Liverpool Direct Limited is a BT joint-venture company.

### 2.1 Why 'digital' not 'website'?

This document is a recommended digital services strategy for North Ayrshire Council (NAC). It outlines the current position and the aims and objectives NAC will adopt in order to realise its vision for digital services.

'Digital' means any service, content or interaction the council delivers (or plans to deliver) online, be it through their main website, 3<sup>rd</sup> party websites such as government portals / local websites, apps, social media, on-site kiosks, email or any other platform.

The council's website is already a key channel and will become increasingly important as the site improves and general internet adoption increases. The site requires immediate attention and there are many areas for improvement. However, the council is already offering some content and services across other platforms such as apps and social media.

By thinking 'digital' and 'user', rather than 'website' and 'organisation', NAC can begin to move towards a higher quality, consistent and sustainable offering - delivering content and services to users in the place that works for them and via the device they want to use.

### 2.2 Background

In order to ensure NAC's digital services support its broader strategies, the council acknowledged the need for a digital strategy. In August 2012, consultants from Liverpool Direct Limited were commissioned to deliver both a strategy and number of supporting documents.

During September 2012, one-to-one interviews, group workshops and presentations were conducted with the Leader of the Council, Members and Officers and the Youth Council.

Their views, alongside an analysis of associated strategies, current systems, resources, local demographics, technology trends and customer behaviour have fed into this strategy.

## 2.3 Why does NAC need a digital services strategy?

Digital is the cheapest channel for delivering many services, and more and more people are able and willing to use it. The current approach is failing, yet internet usage is rising and will continue to do so.

The council wishes to reduce avoidable contact and save money through channel shift (moving people from expensive channels to cheaper channels), whilst still communicating key messages and effectively engaging with residents, businesses and tourists.

The council also has a number of legal obligations to fulfil online, particularly in relation to the Freedom of Information, Data Protection, Disability Discrimination and other Acts.

To achieve its aims and meet its obligations, the council must provide a customer-focused, high quality digital experience that people can use and trust.

This service must also be sustainable and measurable, so an efficient (but appropriately resourced) model of management and governance is required.

## 2.4 Strategic fit

The digital strategy primarily supports the broader strategic aim of NAC's Customer Service Strategy, which in turn supports the Council Plan.

### 2.4.1 Customer Service Strategy aim:

The council approved a Customer Service Strategy in 2011. Key extracts are below:

"North Ayrshire Council will make access to its services available through appropriate and cost effective contact channels designed with the needs and preferences of its individual customers."

The Customer Service Strategy supports the Council's core objective of operating more efficiently and effectively. Implementation of the Customer Services Strategy forms part of the Council's Action Plan for 2012-13. Part of the core objective is to:

- Aim to provide the best services to our residents and to be one of the top performing Councils in Scotland
- Seek to improve our services and to reduce any duplication or inefficiency, working closely with our public, private and voluntary sector partners
- Become an efficient, more innovative and flexible organisation, adapting to change. To be recognised for innovation and modern thinking, by continually reviewing our performance so that we are more effective and efficient"

### **2.4.2 Related strategies**

The following documents were reviewed and have influenced the digital services strategy:

1. Customer Services Strategy
2. ICT strategy
3. Communications strategy
4. Information management strategy
5. Digital Engagement Strategy

### **2.5 Delivery documents**

The following documents were provided by Liverpool Direct Limited to support the delivery of this strategy:

1. Governance and management model
2. 12 month implementation plan
3. Design principles

## 2.6 Summary of internal consultation

During September 2012, one-to-one interviews, group workshops and presentations were conducted with the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive, Members and Officers and the Youth Council.

There was almost unilateral agreement that:

1. Structuring sites / apps, writing content and designing interfaces around the needs of the customer (not the organisation) is not only desirable, but essential if aims are to be achieved
2. Information is hard to find via both search or navigation
3. The quality of content varies greatly across the site
4. The website does not represent a positive image of the council, or indeed North Ayrshire
5. No officer or team has responsibility for user experience
6. The gap between those currently responsible for adding content and the subject experts who understand the service is problematic
7. There are no meaningful performance metrics or targets
8. Opportunities to save money are not being realised, as existing self-service opportunities and key information is buried away
9. It is not worth marketing the site in its current state
10. Current issues are predominantly due to a historical lack of strategic direction, ownership, governance, customer-focus and investment in a central team (investment in software / systems was not cited as an issue)
11. There are more opportunities for self-service (in terms more complex interaction with payment systems / back office systems). The primary short-term concern is how hard it is to find information, the language used and the absence of clear links to existing self-service opportunities
12. The North Ayrshire phone app enables users to report issues, but they do not receive progress updates about issue resolution

Some stakeholders had specific ideas for new online services. They are listed in appendix 1 but should be subject to analysis / business case / corporate prioritisation by the council's programme board.

## 2.7 External rating of current site

Every year the Society of IT Management (SOCITM) undertake a comprehensive review of council websites and publish a report which their rating of sites.

In 2012, NAC's website received the lowest possible rating of 1 star (4 is the maximum), down from a ranking of 2 stars in 2011.

The issues cited by SOCITM reflect those mentioned by officers, members and the public. SOCITM, like the UK government via gov.uk are now focused on a user-centric approach to digital.

They want councils to understand digital, they want digital to be owned and they want councils to start with user need – not the needs of the organisation.



### 3 Current situation

There has clearly been investment in technology; including various applications, the content management system and the Lagan Customer Relationship Management system which is used to log and track customer enquiries. The council has a reasonable infrastructure and some very strong CRM integration, which is working well.

However, there has been little investment in the people, processes and the management model required to develop, manage and continually improve the council's digital services.

The corporate website (and other satellite sites) suffers from a lack of defined purpose, ownership, governance, rigorous central management and continuous improvement.

Separate sites owned and managed by the council have been created, each with a very different look and feel from the corporate site (e.g. information for libraries, communities and teachers exists in a completely separate site)

The main site has grown organically into silos of varying quality - some areas are managed but many are not. There is no real content governance; for the most part service areas can publish whatever they like.

The net effect is a site which:

- Is difficult to navigate
- Is difficult to search
- Contains complex and verbose content, often written using the language of the organisation (not the customer)
- Provides an inconsistent user experience
- Does not reflect user need / demand
- Does not reflect well on the organisation or the region
- Yields little or no useful management information
- Is generating unnecessary contact
- Cannot be marketed as a core channel in its current state
- Does not work well on non-desktop devices

## 4 Positioning

### 4.1 Digital trends

#### 4.1.1 Internet usage

- Access to north-ayrshire.gov.uk has increased 15% in the last 12 months
- Internet usage in North Ayrshire is currently at 77.6% (National Average 80%)
- The number of internet users in North Ayrshire is over 100,000
- 52% of UK Mobile phone users have a smartphone

#### 4.1.2 Mobile / tablets / other non-desktop devices

Mobile usage is widely predicted to overtake desktop usage by 2014/15 - in September 2012 20% of the visits to north-ayrshire.gov.uk were from a mobile device. The council must consider all devices users when writing content, developing interfaces and procuring applications.

Rather than manage two sites and two sets of content (desktop site and 'mobile' site), the council should adopt a responsive design approach. This involves creating a site that responds to the width and height of the user's device (e.g. desktop, tablet, phone). For example, some content can be presented in a different order, at a different size or with a different style depending on the display size of the device.

Designing user-focused content and considering how it will work on different devices is essential to this approach.

#### 4.1.3 Simplicity and customer-focus

The government is beginning to realise what successful commercial organisations have long known: creating a simple, intuitive customer experience is key. Websites need to be managed like a business, with decisions supported by evidence and customer insight.

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) has just launched and it places simplicity at its heart. Much of their time has been spent writing user-focused content.

Local government is beginning to follow, and SOCITM is now pushing councils to focus on customer need.

#### 4.1.4 Open data, transparency and sharing

Open data is about making public sector information freely available to everyone, re-useable without restriction and accessible in standard, machine-readable formats.

The emphasis is on opening up all forms of public sector information unless there are specific reasons not to, such as issues of personal privacy or intellectual property rights.

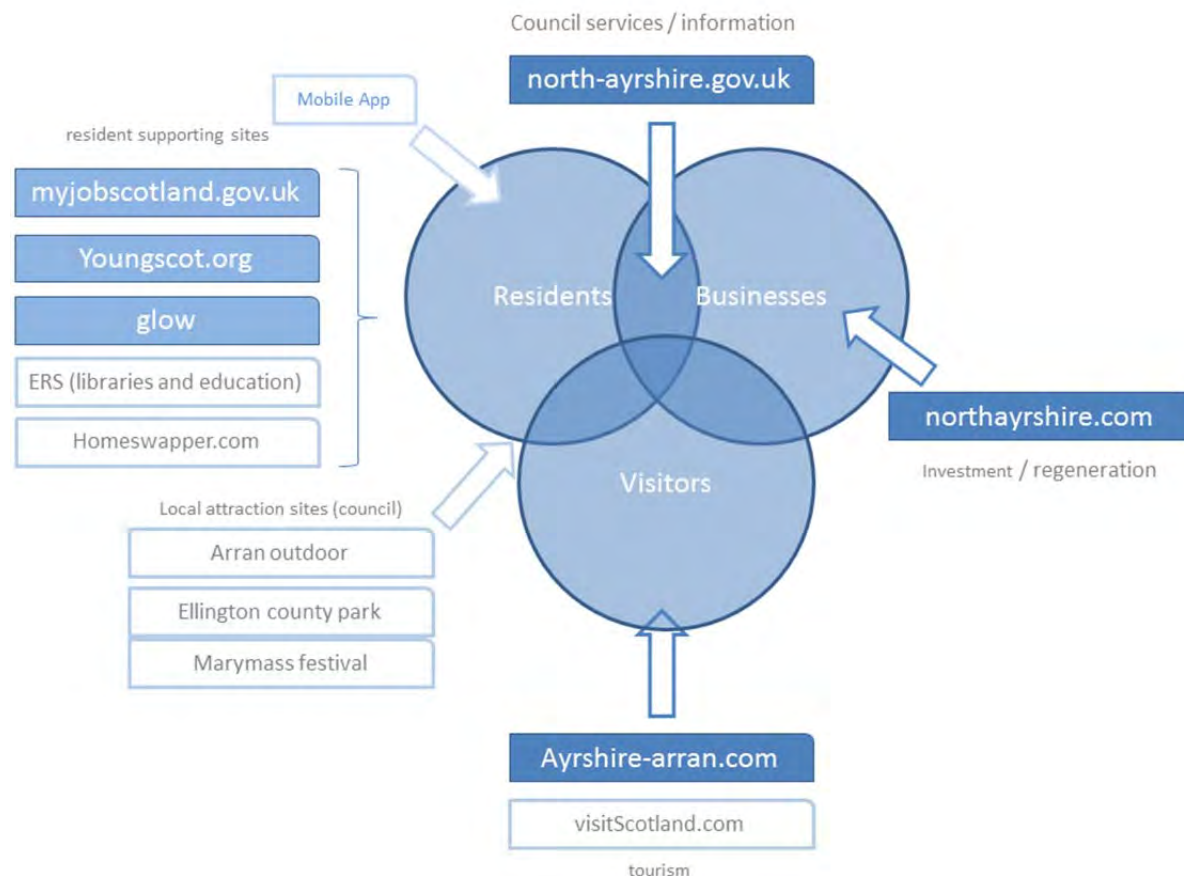
The benefits of opening up public data cover:

- A shift from data collection to data usage and analysis, ensuring that the true value of information can be realised;
- Improved data discovery and reduced duplication of effort;
- More efficient, effective and informed data sharing;
- Improved use of information and evidence in policy making;
- Improved experience for information requestors;
- Opportunities for the public sector, private sector or individuals to make new and innovative use of data and provide creative solutions.

In addition to sharing data, the UK government is now publically sharing much of the code it uses to generate <http://gov.uk> and being transparent about their journey towards a customer-focused offering (<http://digital.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/> )

### 4.3 North Ayrshire's digital landscape

North Ayrshire has a number of websites serving the people and businesses of the area as well as potential tourists and investors. In order to understand how these sites work together we have mapped the landscape of digital services in the area. The council directly or indirectly manages many of these services.



This landscape shows that north-ayrshire.gov.uk is one of many digital offerings, with other partner websites targeting tourists, investors, young people etc. The council has limited resources and aggressive savings targets, so the primary focus of the main website should be service delivery to residents and businesses. Links to services provided by other organisations can be offered where applicable.

There is only a limited facility for the council to share documents and work collaboratively with partner agencies. However this was not cited as high priority issue. The business need for an extranet-type facility should be reviewed.

## 5 Vision and approach

The council's vision for digital service delivery:

*“Provide efficient, **customer-focused** digital services via the devices and platforms our citizens prefer to use”*

### 5.1 Approach

The council should adopt the following approach in order to achieve its aims for digital services<sup>1</sup>:

- In everything we do, we **start with user needs**
  - The first question we'll ask when presented with a problem to solve or an opportunity to take advantage of is: “What do users need from this?”
  - If we don't understand user needs, we'll find out (web analytics, call volumes, surveys etc.)
  - The organisation's need will always be mapped to user needs (what will motivate a user to do the thing we want them to do?)
  - User need will guide how we write content, what we choose to add or remove, how we design interfaces, how we prioritise features and how we prioritise delivery
- We aim to **give people what they want**, without getting in the way
  - We will give people the right amount of information to complete a task successfully – no more, no less
  - Where we seek to influence behaviour or change perceptions, we will do so intelligently, and in a way that does not detract from our users' ability to quickly complete a task (e.g. deliver key comms messages once user has successfully completed a task)
  - We will respect our users' time (help them do what they want as quickly as possible)
- We **build** everything we do **so we can measure** it
  - If we can't measure, we can't improve
  - We will consider actionable measures of success at the beginning of each project
  - We will test our measurement methods during development

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<sup>1</sup> Our principles are based on those of the Government Digital Service Team (responsible for [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

- Every choice we make is **backed with evidence**
  - Without evidence, we risk delivering what the organisation ‘thinks’ people need, not what they really need. This in turn will result in unnecessary contact.
  - We will consider user-experience research, our own website usage data, internal MI data, customer surveys and examples of success / failure of similar projects.
- Where we don’t provide it, we **signpost**
  - We will not directly manage content that we do not own / cannot automatically syndicate -we do not have the resources to maintain such content and there is usually little demand for it.
  - If there is a proven demand for such information or such information is necessary for a user to continue their interaction with us, and then we will signpost users to it (key sites we will link to are outlined in 4.3 ‘digital landscape’).
- The website is a living thing. We do, **iterate, then iterate again**
  - We are building to measure, so we need to act on this measurement
  - If we find a problem or area for improvement, we’ll change, test and change again.
  - We’ll embrace an agile approach and we’ll take some calculated risks
- We are **building digital services, not websites.**
  - We will not assume that our website is the only place to offer our services
  - We will work towards making content, data and services available to local and national sites, web developers and others
  - Where practical, we’ll go to our users, rather than expecting them to come to us

## 6 Aims and objectives<sup>2</sup>

In order to realise the digital vision, the following aims have been agreed:

1. **Deliver** customer-focused digital services
2. **Sustain** and improve
3. **Engage** and communicate
4. **Build** and maintain a flexible technical platform

### 6.1 Deliver customer-focused digital services

“Giving the customer what they actually want, where they want it - without getting in the way.”

#### 6.1.1 Start with user needs

All processes must start with identifying the needs of the users, not the needs of the organisation. Building for user need results in services that people want, and services they can use.

If the driver to publish is legislative, then the exact legislative requirement will be checked by the Digital Team and the document will be placed in the relevant section (if required see 6.1.2)

#### 6.1.2 Segment

Do not blend information about how the council manages itself with customer service information. By segmenting the website into the following areas, the council can still be open, transparent and meet legislative requirements, whilst maintaining focus on service delivery:

- **Resident:** Information or transactions which residents require in order to access a service
- **Business:** Information or transactions which businesses require in order to access a service
- **Tourists:** Key information and signposting to other resources for tourists
- **About the council:** Council plans, policies and strategies, how the council functions and performs, meetings and minutes, information about councillors, documents which may be required by legislation etc.

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<sup>2</sup> Separate 12 month project plan, governance / management model and design principles documents outline details

Whilst partnership working and collaboration with stakeholders is out of scope of this strategy, the creation of a section / extranet for stakeholders (local and national agencies etc) may be desirable. It may also help ensure the main site remains focused on residents, businesses and tourists.

### **6.1.3 Build for inclusion**

Recognise that digital does not always mean 'website' and Build services that are digital by design, but are accessible to all.

Building digital by design means considering how digital plays a role in the whole service delivery.

### **6.1.4 Make decisions based on evidence**

Put evidence at the core. All decisions (be they system, design, content or technical) should be based on evidence.

Core sources for gathering evidence include:

- **Existing user-experience research**

- Drawing on existing research that can be applied. A wealth of evidence exists to help the council understand how people interact with the website, how they consume content, how images can be used to greater effect, how forms can be designed and so on.

- **Website behaviour analytics**

The council has access to a huge amount of data about how users behave - what they search for, what they view, how they get there and where they came from. Analytics tools can be used to set and measure specific goals, trigger alerts, measure different versions of the same content/interaction to see which works best etc.

- **Customer surveys**

Analytics can help the council understand what customers do with the existing site, but they offer little insight into customers might want to do (but could not), their perceptions of the council or how to improve the softer elements of user experience. Targeted customer surveys will be used to answer many of these questions.

- **User observation**

There is no substitute for observing how real people interact with websites and apps. Where appropriate, a cross-section of residents should be invited to use these services under observation.

- **Call Centre management information**

Information from the CRM and call centre agents can be used to identify opportunities to



reduce avoidable contact and identify emerging issues or alerts that should be communicated online. Additionally, data can be analysed to establish if call volume reductions correlate to changes in digital services.

Building a strong evidence-base is a key enabler in evidence-based design. It is important that measures of success are defined at the beginning of each project and then refined throughout the development cycle.

Suggested metrics and methods of measuring performance have been provided separately as part of the operational / management model.

### 6.1.5 Do less and be lean

Users of the main website do not come browse / out of general interest in council activities. The vast majority want to find, do and leave. This customer behaviour needs to be acknowledged and respected.

Doing less means focusing resources on developing services/ content that are likely to make a real difference in an online context. If customers think NAC provides the service (but it does not), or if NAC identifies information it does not own but needs to share, then NAC should **signpost not write**.

Being lean means delivering the information the customer wants and needs in order to complete a task. No flowery language, council speak or organisational information. When completing a task, users do not need to know how the council is organised or the strategies associated with the service.

When trying to influence perceptions or sell messages, we must do so intelligently and not get in the way.

This is the essence of customer focus – giving customers what they need - not what we **think** they want.

### 6.1.6 Set expectations and communicate progress

The council should ensure users can report issues from a device of their choosing, but must also manage expectations and communicate progress. This will help avoid unnecessary additional contact whilst providing a better customer experience.

For online transactions, the council should endeavour to inform users (via the channel of their choosing):

1 What will happen **next**?

2. When it **will** happen
3. When it **has** happened
4. If anything has **not gone to plan**

## 6.2 Sustain and improve

Many of the issues with the current site are due to lack of ownership, governance and management.

There is no value in launching a great site then walking away.

- *Digital **is** going to become the main channel for service delivery.*
- *The council **must** manage and resource it appropriately in order to achieve its aims*

Great digital experiences can be created once the council understands customers, designs intuitive content / interfaces and tests then refines them.

The council must respond to demand quickly and effectively, so ***empowering the right people to take an idea forward, develop, test, refine and launch is essential.***

### 6.2.1 Resourcing

The council should form a digital team which:

- Has a leader
- Champions the customer and evidence-based decision making
- Has sufficient autonomy to make decisions about content, structure, design and functionality
- Has the skills to deliver
- Has ownership of both user experience and the targets for improving it
- Is engaged in any project, procurement or strategy development which has an internet, intranet, extranet, outbound communications or social element

### 6.2.2 Operational management model

The council should implement a management model which:

- Ensures services are delivered to agreed design / content principles
- Formalises and maintains links between subject experts, content designers and call centre
- Delivers content within agreed SLAs
- Has clear escalation paths (when Digital Team and service area cannot reach agreement)
- Owns a content review, analytics and user testing review schedule and associated action plans

### 6.2.3 Governance board

The council should implement a governance model which:

1. Advises on corporate priorities should the Digital Team be given conflicting requirements / project deadlines
2. Links Digital Team to Corporate Management Team (CMT) / emerging strategies
3. Champions a customer-focused approach at CMT
4. Rules on escalated issues / facilitates a resolution
5. Signs off on proposed changes to improvement targets
6. Meets twice a year to review performance and targets

## 6.3 Engage and communicate

### 6.4 Public engagement in design and development

Prior to and after the launch of any new service (including the first iteration of the council's new website), qualitative and quantitative research should be undertaken to ensure the council understands customer need and that services are usable.

Customers should participate in tests designed to ensure that navigation and layout decisions reflect customer priorities, that interfaces are usable and that the language used is understood.

Quantitative testing and analysis can be performed via online surveys, testing tools and web analytics. Qualitative testing may involve face-to-face usability testing with a small group of customers, and an assessment of general feedback in order to identify common themes or issues.

Specific testing methodologies have been detailed in a separate document.

### 6.5 External communications / marketing

Any new service will be subject to a specific marketing and comms plan to ensure relevant target groups are aware of (and engaged in) the launch. For the initial launch of the website, the message should be clear and easy to digest - it should convey that services are easier to find and use, and that the council is committed to improving things further. Specific services should be marketed to the relevant target audience at a later date (once the service has developed to a satisfactory level and a marketing plan has been defined).

Additionally, processes should be put in place to ensure web page addresses used in marketing collateral are redirected to the new equivalent page.

### 6.6 Internal engagement

Alongside an internal beta of the site (the period in which service areas are able to feedback on accuracy of content / missing services prior to launch) the Digital Team should create an internal blog to share progress and customer insight.

We also suggest that those affected by the implementation of the operational / management plan are invited to a series of workshops to explain what this means for them and the organisation.

### **Note:**

The council has approved a separate digital engagement strategy, and so communications and engagement in terms of PR, reputation-management, general 'engagement' and communications via social media, the website or other digital channels are out of scope of this strategy.

## **6.7 Build and maintain a flexible technical platform**

The technology platform should evolve to enable data and content to be accessible to other systems and organisations.

### **6.7.1 A Flexible Platform**

The platform for digital service delivery goes beyond a content management system; it includes the data and systems used to deliver services to our customers such as mapping, council tax, assets management, street works systems etc.

The current web platform is in a good position to deliver many of the (web-based) services required now, but as digital service delivery diversifies and moves beyond traditional website delivery to include mobile, IVR via phone, social media, hyper-local sites, open data and beyond, the platform must evolve in a way that supports the delivery of data, content and services beyond NAC's infrastructure.

- Consider all digital channels when making platform decisions
- Include multi-channel service delivery in all designs

### **6.7.2 An Open Platform**

A platform capable of sending/receiving data to/from other parts of the council, partners and the public.

- Identify data sets that might be of use to others, reduce FOI requests etc
- Provide easy and clear access to the data
- Encourage data re-use by partners for joined up service delivery

### **6.7.3 An Integrated Platform**

An efficient service requires an integrated platform - where systems can talk to each other, data and information can flow without the need for human intervention, and service delivery can be optimised to use the tools we have.

There is a two-pronged approach to an integrated platform:

1. Identify and expand use of existing tools:

- a. Where possible get the most out of our existing systems via the existing APIs and data access layers available
- 2. Procure “open” systems
  - a. Ensure that an accessible documented API and data access layer exists so services can be designed to work together and not apart.

## 7 Action summary<sup>3</sup>

Aim	Objective	Year 1 actions	Year 2 actions	Year 3+
<b>Deliver customer-focused Digital Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Start with user need</li> <li>Build for inclusion</li> <li>Make decisions based on evidence</li> <li>Do less – be lean</li> <li>Set expectations and communicate progress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify key tasks</li> <li>Develop new site structure and test</li> <li>Segment site (resident, business, about, tourists)</li> <li>Re-write priority content / migrate other content</li> <li>Signpost to content elsewhere</li> <li>Take only key content from separate library site</li> <li>Design sign-off</li> <li>Launch internal beta for feedback</li> <li>Release</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and improve core journeys</li> <li>Re-write remainder of content</li> <li>3<sup>rd</sup> part apps skinned / UX'ed</li> <li>Develop business case for extranet</li> <li>Identify areas where giving customer live issue resolution feedback is desirable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring libraries and culture site into main site, and move content for professionals to extranet</li> <li>Begin offering life issue resolution feedback via customers preferred channel</li> </ul>
<b>Sustain and improve</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resourcing</li> <li>Management model and governance</li> <li>Governance board</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish digital team</li> <li>Centralise content management model</li> <li>Establish management model and governance board</li> <li>Set targets and begin reporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review governance and management model</li> <li>Set improvement targets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review digital strategy to ensure it reflects emerging business and customer needs</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Year 1 actions and governance and management models are fully detailed in supporting documents

Aim	Objective	Year 1 actions	Year 2 actions	Year 3+
Comms / perception / engagement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Segmenting news from service alerts</li> <li>Identify key comms messages and add to golden pages (pages a user gets at the end of a successful journey)</li> <li>Consider segmenting news, events key alerts into topics or areas.</li> <li>Use tools such as email subscriptions and RSS to push more targeted news and alerts to interested parties.</li> <li>Try and ensure communications contain a call to action which is measurable</li> </ul>	<p>Align engagement strategy (current draft) with digital and implement</p> <p>Increase the use of Social Media for specific and measurable impact on defined campaigns</p>	Subject to engagement strategy



Aim	Objective	Year 1 actions	Year 2 actions	Year 3+
<b>Build and maintain flexible technical platform</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible</li> <li>• Open</li> <li>• Integrated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver responsive design</li> <li>• Document quality of integration points (APIs etc) across all corporate systems</li> <li>• Define standards for procurement and development of new apps (APIs, customisation etc)</li> <li>• Build standards into procurement / dev process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create data catalogue – key data sets, where they reside, who owns them, how often they should be published, how they can be extracted and how they can be presented</li> <li>• Launch open data subsite (CSV format as minimum)</li> <li>• Identify opportunities to improve UX or MI with system integration / single account</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin offering more structured data, content and services via API / widgets etc</li> <li>• Review value / strategic fit of CMS and associated applications</li> </ul>

## 8 Appendix A: Consultation schedule

### 8.1 One-to one meetings

A number of one to one meetings with officers and members covering a customer centric approach to digital, issues faced by the organisation, potential areas for savings and investment and the organisation's vision for the future.

Attendee	Job Title
<b>Lynne McEwan</b>	Communication Manager
<b>Michele Gilmour</b>	Communication Officer
<b>Hazel Lauder</b>	Information & Records Manager
<b>Yvonne Baulk</b>	Head of Finance
<b>Gavin Macgregor</b>	Head of HR & Organisational Development
<b>Iona Colvin</b>	Director of Social Services & Health
<b>Julie Davis</b>	Business Support Manager
<b>Ian Mackay</b>	Solicitor to the Council
<b>Willie Gibson</b>	Leader of the Council
<b>Angus Bodie</b>	Head of Infrastructure & Design
<b>Craig Hatton</b>	Head of Environment
<b>John Godwin</b>	Service Development Officer (SS&H)
<b>Esther Gunn-Stewart</b>	Customer Services Manager
<b>Alan Blakely</b>	IT Manager
<b>Margaret Gordon</b>	Team Manager (Systems)
<b>Colin O'Kane</b>	Change Programme Manager
<b>Lynne McEwan</b>	Communication Manager
<b>Audrey Sutton</b>	Head of Community & Culture
<b>Carol Kirk</b>	Director of Education & Skills

## 8.2 Member Workshops

A number of member workshops were held with councillors from across the political parties – these workshops covered the approach to customer-centric digital service delivery and explored how councillors engage with their constituency / how the website could aid them and their constituents.

## 8.3 Content Workshop

There was a detailed workshop with officers to explore how the council currently maintains and updates content across systems, how information flows to the website / CRM and other apps etc

## 8.4 General feedback

There was almost unilateral agreement that:

13. Structuring sites / apps, writing content and designing interfaces around the needs of the customer (not the organisation) is not only desirable, but essential if aims are to be achieved
14. Information is hard to find via both search or navigation
15. The quality of content varies greatly across the site
16. The website does not represent a positive image of the council, or indeed North Ayrshire
17. No officer or team has responsibility for user experience
18. The gap between those currently responsible for adding content and the subject experts who understand the service is very problematic
19. There are no meaningful performance metrics or targets
20. Opportunities to save money are not being realised, as existing self-service opportunities and key information is buried away
21. It is not worth marketing the site in its current state
22. Current issues are predominantly due to an historical lack of strategic direction, ownership, governance, customer-focus and investment in a central team (investment in software / systems was not cited as an issue)
23. There are more opportunities for self-service (in terms more complex interaction with payment systems / back office systems), although the primary short-term concern is how hard it is to find information, the language used and the absence of clear links to existing self-service opportunities
24. The North Ayrshire phone app enables users to report issues, but they do not receive progress updates about issue resolution

## 8.5 Officer suggestions

In addition to general feedback about the current state of play and opportunities / barriers, a number of officers also noted some specific opportunities for new applications/ integrations that might help their area of the business to improve service or realise efficiencies. Obviously these would be subject to further investigation / development of a business case:

Item	Potential benefit
<b>Self-service for rate payers, council tax payers, creditors and debtors</b>	Reduced calls, increase in income
<b>Increase take up of council ebilling</b>	Reduce paper Save postage costs
<b>Proactive (SMS/email) contact to customers(payment due / received etc)</b>	Increase in payments
<b>Social care – reception services</b> <b>Ability to pay and order services online</b>	Reduction in calls Improvement in processes
<b>Track and report housing repairs online (possible diagnostic tool)</b>	reduction in contact
<b>Increased visibility of the housing improvement program</b>	Reduction in unnecessary repair reports
<b>Online consultations with tenants</b>	Increased engagement
<b>Better information on social enterprises and businesses looking at investment in the area</b>	Business Investment Increase in employment
<b>Improved information on road closures and road works</b>	Reduction in calls / improved traffic flows
<b>Better information (updated as quickly as possible) on potential flooding of the local river systems</b>	Public protection Reduction in calls
<b>Ability for council to advertise business properties</b>	Increase in business rent collection
<b>Improved communications around schools development programme</b>	Engagement
<b>Integration of the library information with the core website</b>	Improved customer experience reduction in calls

Publishing usable / finable maintenance schedules (grass cutting / street cleaning etc)	Reduce calls / manage expectations
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## 9 Version control

Version	Date	Author	Note
<b>0.1 Draft</b>	19/10/2012	LDL Web	Initial draft version for comment
<b>0.2</b>	22/10/2012	LDL Web	Checked / Minor updates
<b>0.3</b>	02/11/2012	LDL Web	Updated as per conference call ready for review on 6/11
<b>0.4</b>	06/11/2012	LDL Web	Updated actions / Objectives
<b>0.5</b>	7/11/2012	LDL Web	Minor typos and clarifications following conference call on 6/11. Expanded 'approach' with some examples. Addition of updated strategic fit as provided by SP. Added appendix.
<b>0.6</b>	8/11/2012	LDL Web	Updated appendix following additional revisions received from SP
<b>0.7</b>	29/11/2012	LDL Web	Final Feedback, included references to complimentary strategies and policies.
<b>0.8</b>	30/11/2012	LDL Web	Styling, Layout final proof.
<b>0.9</b>	12/12/2012	LDL Web	Minor amendments as requested by SP
<b>1</b>	13/12/2012	LDL Web	Final ammends

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## **NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **Agenda Item 4**

**12 March 2013**

#### **Cabinet**

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**Subject:** **North Ayrshire Household Survey**

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**Purpose:** To seek approval to conduct a Household Survey.

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**Recommendation:** The Cabinet is asked to (a) consider the options for conducting a household survey; (b) agree to undertake the household survey during the Spring of 2013; (c) decide which survey method to adopt, with a recommendation that a door-to-door household survey be undertaken as it provides the best balance between cost and confidence levels; and (d) note the attached questions for inclusion in the Household Survey 2013.

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#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 North Ayrshire Council has previously undertaken Household Surveys to seek the views of all North Ayrshire households on the services they receive from the Council. These surveys have traditionally taken place once every four years with the intention of providing new Council administrations with the most up-to-date feedback from residents.
- 1.2 The surveys capture a snapshot of residents' views of the Council and our services and allow us to track long-term trends, including customer satisfaction levels. Residents' perceptions of the Council's main aims and objectives are also measured through the surveys.
- 1.3 Surveys of this scale and depth require specialist knowledge to be successful. It is also important to ensure that the surveys are conducted independently of the Council. To this end, previous surveys have been undertaken by independent market research companies.

#### **2. Current Position**

- 2.1 The Communications Team has undertaken a procurement exercise and has engaged a market research company to carry out this work.

2.2 The household survey has the following broad aims:

- To identify trends and patterns in previous survey results
- To gauge public satisfaction and perception of the Council and create a benchmark to measure future results
- To assess the public's understanding and support for the Council's future plans
- To help inform the way the Council determines priorities and allocates resources, taking the public's priorities into account.

2.3 A questionnaire has been developed for the 2013 survey, seeking the views of residents. This questionnaire covers a number of key areas including: service usage; public satisfaction; how the Council communicates and engages with residents and the prioritisation of key Council objectives and goals (see Appendix 2).

#### **Implications, Advantages and Disadvantages of Alternative Survey Methods**

2.4 The various advantages and disadvantages of a number of different survey methods have been considered along with the associated costs of delivery.

2.5 Each method requires to meet specific criteria and provide:

- (a) an efficient, best value approach to conducting a household survey
- (b) statistically valid results by ensuring a sufficiently large sample of residents participate in the survey. This will ensure that the results are statistically robust and form a useful basis for decision-making.

2.6 Typically, +/- 5% is used as a "rule of thumb" by the market research industry as an acceptable confidence level. The lower the percentage figure, the higher degree of confidence in the results.

2.7 As well as evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the alternative survey methods, it is important to ensure a balance can be struck between having confidence in the survey results and the costs involved in undertaking the survey.

2.8 As the household survey information will be analysed for individual communities as well as the North Ayrshire population as a whole, the response rates must be high enough to ensure the results are robust at all levels of analysis.



- 2.9 It should be noted that an online version of the survey would also be available on the Council's website and that all residents would be given the opportunity to request hard copy questionnaires. This facility would be promoted through a variety of communications channels including local newspapers, the Council's website and our Twitter account.
- 2.10 Details of each survey method are provided below while the attached table at Appendix 1 provides a comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of each survey method.

### **Postal Survey Method**

- 2.10 A postal survey would provide continuity with previous surveys undertaken in 2004 and 2007 and would allow every North Ayrshire household the opportunity to participate in the survey.
- 2.11 A full postal household survey, delivers high confidence levels of +/- 1.43%, however, it is cost prohibitive due to the historically low levels of response rates achieved (traditionally 7% return) – resulting in significant wastage in postal charges.
- 2.12 Representative postal samples of households - such as a one-in-three household survey or a one-in-four household survey method - would go some way to reducing postal wastage, but will result in proportionally lower numbers of responses. Although the data would still be statistically valid across North Ayrshire as a whole, the confidence levels would drop when survey results were analysed at an individual 'settlement' level, but would still be within the acceptable confidence level range.
- 2.13 The cost to deliver a full postal survey would be £30,569; the cost for a one-in-three household survey would be £13,982 and the cost for a one-in-four household survey would be £11,784.

### **Door-to-door Survey Method**

- 2.14 The door-to-door survey method gives the Council the ability to set and control the response levels at 3,000 interviews. The survey results would be broken down into six geographical settlement areas (Irvine, Kilwinning, Garnock Valley, Three Towns, North Coast and Arran) with interviews conducted across each of the six areas.
- 2.15 Data from this sample would be accurate to at least +/- 1.79% for the North Ayrshire population as a whole and +/- 4.38% for each individual settlement area. These are considered to be a robust basis for decision making.

- 2.16 We would use a random stratified sample to ensure that the survey results give a representative cross-section of the North Ayrshire population – both as a whole and at an individual settlement level.
- 2.17 Based on a guaranteed sample size of 3,000, the cost of the door-to-door option would be £22,900. This method offers the Council a good balance between cost and confidence values and it is the preferred option for undertaking a household survey.

### **On-Street Interviewing Method**

- 2.18 Although slightly cheaper than the door-to-door option, there are some methodological difficulties with this approach, as it would only be representative of people in the chosen interviewing locations, for example a town centre or a community hall. The resulting data may, therefore, be unrepresentative of the North Ayrshire population as a whole and at an individual settlement level.
- 2.19 The comparative costs of delivering an on-street survey of 3,000 people would be £21,400.

### **Telephone Interview Method**

- 2.20 Telephone interviewing is particularly useful as a survey method where the population is widely dispersed. There are, however, some methodological issues with this approach. Telephone interviewing is not effective for asking certain types of questions such as choosing answers from long lists. In addition, to ensure adequate coverage of the working population telephone calls must, by necessity, be conducted in the evening, which can be seen as intrusive and may impact on the Council's reputation.
- 2.21 The cost of outsourcing a survey of 3,000 telephone interviews would be £26,000.
- 2.22 For comparison purposes, we have examined the cost of delivering a telephone interview survey in-house using the Council's Customer Contact Centre.
- 2.23 The Customer Contact Centre does not have the capacity to absorb this work during normal opening hours and would therefore need to recruit additional staff to deliver this project. The cost of delivering a telephone survey in-house is, therefore, estimated at circa £24,000.

## **Survey Timing**

- 2.24 Timing is an important consideration when conducting a household survey, as it can have a direct influence on overall response levels. It is recommended that the Council undertake the survey in the Spring of 2013. This will ensure there is no conflict with the People's Panel postal survey to be conducted by North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership in October 2013.

## **3. Proposals**

- 3.1 The Cabinet is asked to:

- (a) Consider the options for conducting a household survey
- (b) Agree to undertake the household survey during the Spring of 2013
- (c) Decide which survey method to adopt, with a recommendation that a door-to-door household survey be undertaken as it provides the best balance between cost and confidence levels.
- (d) Note the attached questions for inclusion in the Household Survey 2013.

## **4. Implications**

### Financial Implications

- 4.1 The cost will be met from existing resources.

### Human Resource Implications

- 4.2 There are no human resource implications arising from this report.

### Legal Implications

- 4.3 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

### Equality Implications

- 4.4 There are no equality implications arising from this report.

### Environmental Implications

- 4.5 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

### Implications for Key Priorities

- 4.6 This report has implications for the Council Plan 2012-17 objective of Operating more efficiently and effectively.

## **5. Consultations**

- 5.1 Consultation has taken place with the appointed Market Research company to provide specialist knowledge and information about the survey methods available and with the Corporate Management Team and a range of senior staff on the content of the questionnaire.

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 An options appraisal has been undertaken of the survey methods available to deliver the Council's Household Survey including information on cost, response rates and confidence levels.



ELMA MURRAY  
Chief Executive

Reference :

For further information please contact Lynne McEwan, Corporate Communications Manager on telephone number 01294 324117

## **Background Papers**

None

## Appendix 1: Comparison Table - Methods for Household Survey

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages	Expected Response Numbers	Con-fidence Levels	Costs
Postal – full survey of all households	Respondents are able to take time to consider their response Unit cost per response can be low if there is a high response rate Gives the highest possible number of people the opportunity to take part	Assumes an understanding of questionnaire Unit cost per response can be high if there is a low response rate	4375	+/-1.43	£30,569
Postal – one in three household survey	As above		1458	+/-2.54	£13,982
Postal - one in four household survey	As above		1164	+/-2.85	£11,784
Door-to-door	Gives best opportunity to supplement survey questions with visual examples. Residents can seek clarification on particular questions Can be cost-effective where target interviewees are geographically close to one another	Needs to ensure coverage of working population (i.e. conducting some evening interviews) Not cost-effective for dispersed population	3000	+/-1.79	£22,900
On-street interviewing	Can be cost-effective if it is a short interview Allows targeting of quotas Opportunity to supplement survey questions with visual examples.	Ineffective at engaging people confined to their home Potential for time to be wasted by approaching non-residents Can be seen as intrusive	3000	+/-1.79	£21,400
Telephone Interviewing Outsourcing	More cost-effective where there is a widely dispersed population	Can be seen as intrusive and could have a negative impact on the Council's reputation Not effective for asking certain types of question (e.g. choosing from lists of options) Would require to take place outside office hours to ensure coverage of working population	3000	+/-1.79	£26,000



## Help make a difference

### - let us know what you think!

1. Are you?

Female ☐ Male ☐

2. How old are you?

16 to 25 years of age ☐

26 to 34 ☐

35 to 44 ☐

45 to 54 ☐

55 to 64 ☐

65 to 74 ☐

75 years or over ☐

3. Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Yes ☐ No ☐

4(a) In which of the following areas do you live (please tick one box only)?

Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston ☐

Arran ☐

Irvine ☐

Kilwinning ☐

Garnock Valley ☐

North Coast (including Cumbrae) ☐

4(b) If you know your postcode, please insert it in the boxes below.

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5. Which of the following provides the closest estimate of your total household income before tax?

Up to £10,000 ☐ £25,001 to £30,000 ☐

£10,000 to £15,000 ☐ £30,001 to £40,000 ☐

£15,001 to £20,000 ☐ £40,001 to £50,000 ☐

£20,001 to £25,000 ☐ Over £50,000 ☐

6. We have listed below a number of services.

(i) Please tick which of these services you, or a member of your household, have used in the last year

(ii) Please use the scale given to let us know how satisfied you / your household are with each of these services (please tick one box in each row)

(i) Services used (tick all that apply)		(ii) Satisfaction with services (tick one box in each row)				
		Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither / Nor	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Support for local businesses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community centres / facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community learning activities (for young people and adults)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consumer and trading advice services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Council housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Council Tax and Benefits service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day care / residential care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Home care services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Household refuse and recycling collection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Library / mobile library services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meals at home service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nurseries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Planning / Building Control	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Primary schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recycling centres	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Registration of births, deaths and marriages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Respite care services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Roads and footpaths	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Secondary schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Special refuse uplifts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Street cleaning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Welfare / benefits / debt advice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Council as a whole	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



7. Are you satisfied that the Council keeps you informed about the services it provides? Yes / No

We have listed below a number of ways that you can have contact with, or get information from, the Council.

(i) Which of these methods have you used in the past year ?  
(please tick all that apply)?

(ii) Please rank your levels of satisfaction with each method  
1 very good, 2 good, 3 average, 4 poor, 5 very poor

	(i) Which of these methods do you use?	(ii) Please rank your levels of satisfaction
E-mail	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Facebook	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Face-to-face visit to a local office	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Leaflets / newsletters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Letter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Website	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Telephone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Text	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Twitter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Other (please write below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Haven't had contact with, or sought information from, the Council in the past year (please go straight to Question 10)	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Other

8. If you / your household has contacted the Council in the last year can you remember the purpose of the contact (please tick all that apply)? If you have not contacted the Council in the past year please go to Question 9.

To find out some general information	<input type="checkbox"/>
To make a complaint	<input type="checkbox"/>
To provide positive feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>
To find out information about a specific service	<input type="checkbox"/>
To book a specific service (e.g. a special uplift)	<input type="checkbox"/>
To make an application for something (e.g. planning application)	<input type="checkbox"/>
To report something (e.g. a roads / street lighting / fly tipping issue)	<input type="checkbox"/>
To make a payment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't recall a reason	<input type="checkbox"/>
Another reason not listed (please write below)	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about North Ayrshire Council (please tick one box in each row)?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither / Nor	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<b>The Council:</b>					
Actively involves local people in decisions about where and on what services it should spend its money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Distributes its resources fairly across all areas within the Council's boundaries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provides good value for money in terms of the services it provides	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regularly consults the public and takes their views on board prior to making any major decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. The Council is pursuing a number of core objectives that will assist us in targeting resources in the future. These are listed below:

(i) Firstly, please say whether you agree, disagree or are unsure about these core objectives (please tick one box in each row).

(ii) Then, please choose up to **three** of these core objectives that you would say are **most** important (please tick up to three boxes in the final column).

Core Objectives	(i) Agreement or Disagreement with objectives (tick one box in each row)			(ii) Most important objectives (tick up to three boxes)
	Agree	Disagree	Unsure	
Attracting more jobs to North Ayrshire	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increasing training opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regeneration of North Ayrshire's Town Centres	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Protection of vulnerable people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improving educational attainment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improving the health of the community and reducing health inequalities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improving community safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creating more pride and enthusiasm amongst the people and communities of North Ayrshire	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improving the physical environment and infrastructure of North Ayrshire	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. The Council has a number of longer term goals that help direct how we target resources. These are listed below:

(i) Firstly, please say whether you agree, disagree or are unsure about these goals (please tick one box in each row).

(ii) Then, please choose up to **three** of these goals that you would say are **most** important (please tick up to three boxes in the final column).

Long term goals	(i) Agreement or Disagreement with goals (tick one box in each row)			(ii) Most important goals (tick up to three boxes)
	Agree	Disagree	Unsure	
Work with partners to reduce duplication of effort and provide integrated services which delivery value for money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make the Council itself a leaner, more innovative and flexible organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Focus on building the capacity of communities to do things for themselves	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Target resources towards individuals and areas in greatest need	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prioritise expenditure on things that will prevent problems arising in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promote and share good practice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Involve individuals and communities in the design and delivery of services they use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. Where do you think the Council needs to improve?

13. What good things would you say about North Ayrshire Council?

**Confidentiality assured:** North Ayrshire Council and IBP treat your privacy seriously and comply with data protection legislation. IBP will keep your individual response in strictest confidence and will not pass it on to the Council. All names, addresses and telephone numbers will be destroyed once work on the survey has been completed.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP**



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## **NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **Agenda Item 5**

**12 March 2013**

#### **Cabinet**

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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Irvine - Montgomerie Park Masterplan Review and Development</b>
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<b>Purpose:</b>	To seek the agreement of the Cabinet to undertake a review of the approved Masterplan and associated strategies for the delivery and funding of development sites at Montgomerie Park.
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<b>Recommendation:</b>	That the Cabinet agrees:-
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- a. to approve the programme of works and associated expenditure to deliver a revised Masterplan for the development and sale of sites within Montgomerie Park with associated infrastructure;
- b. that further site investigations be undertaken to inform the revised Masterplan;
- c. to a review of the approach to marketing new development parcels designed to improve the viability of and marketability of sites;
- d. to the development of an ongoing programme to include the preparation of associated infrastructure design, marketing particulars and management strategy for the undeveloped land;
- e. that an outline reinvestment plan for capital receipts from the development be used as an infrastructure fund to improve marketability and attract partnership funding;
- f. to receive the revised plan and proposals to a future meeting of the Cabinet for approval.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The North Ayrshire Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy supports the stabilisation and growth of population and the development of sustainable business opportunities to regenerate our towns. Montgomerie Park, Irvine is a key strategic site that will support these ambitions and should also generate further capital receipts as more sites are sold for development. So far, 13.3 hectares of housing land have been delivered, with a further 4.13 hectares in the process of being sold. A remaining 25.9 hectares of land remains to be developed for housing and community uses.
- 1.2 In January 2003, North Ayrshire Council approved a Masterplan to promote the development of Montgomerie Park. The Masterplan was incorporated into the North Ayrshire Council Local Plan (Excluding Isle of Arran) which was adopted on 4 November 2005 and contained policies to promote the development of housing and associated social and community facilities including the provision of a primary school.
- 1.3 The 2003 Masterplan identified 14 sites for private residential development and a Community Facilities Area which included a site for Sheltered Housing, a Primary School with enhanced Community Provision, a Healthcare site and a Retail site. As development progressed, the Masterplan evolved through consultation across Council Services and Community Planning Partners. This led to a revised Masterplan in 2007 as attached in Appendix 1 which largely retained the mix of uses although the sheltered housing became a provision for social rented housing and there was some minor reorganisation of plot boundaries. Both Masterplans were designed to meet the requirements of the NAC Roads Design Guidance produced originally in 1995 by Strathclyde Regional Council. In particular, a distributor road was planned to provide access through the site. Incorporated in the design was extensive peripheral landscaping plus a quality park and open space and play facilities designed to meet the Council's Adopted Policy on the Provision and Maintenance of Landscaping, Open Space and Play areas in New Housing Developments.
- 1.4 The first phases of infrastructure (water, sewerage, gas, electricity, telephones and fibre optics plus main road and path networks) along with Phase 1 of Landscape Works have been completed and sales of sites 1; 13; 14 and 11 were achieved during the period 2004 - 2007 under market conditions which are no longer prevalent. The first 3 sites are fully developed with a total of 194 private houses and 45 social rented houses completed. Development is well underway at Site 11 with some 30 or more houses now occupied and more recently, the sale of site 2 is progressing. Further sales will be dependant on significant fresh infrastructure investment which is required to open up further sites for development.



## **2. Current Position**

- 2.1 Historically, Irvine has never held a strong position in the private housing market and the quantum of development has significantly reduced in recent years. The challenge of securing further private sector developer interest at Montgomerie Park is further exacerbated due to the requirements in the Masterplan for the installation of the relatively expensive distributor road which would be required to be constructed before any further house sales could be achieved. This is likely to prove a prohibitive cost for any potential private sector house builder to secure in advance of house sales.
- 2.2 Whilst prospects are limited for further development in the foreseeable future, new development principles have been produced by Scottish Government which may present an opportunity to refresh our approach to Montgomerie Park and accelerate further land sales. Designing Places was published in March 2010 and is the first policy statement for street design in Scotland. It marks a change in the emphasis of guidance towards place-making and away from a system dominated by the motor car.
- 2.3 This latest approach to place making may provide an opportunity to review how the design and development of Montgomerie Park may be refined to overcome the higher infrastructure costs of the 2007 Masterplan. A fresh Masterplan should also be underpinned by a re-assessment of land values and abnormal development costs and informed in more detail by using the results from selective intrusive site investigations designed to pinpoint the extent of mining areas and refine knowledge of soil conditions and ground bearing capacity. This additional knowledge will be of benefit in developing a revised infrastructure requirement and identifying revised parcels of land designed to be more viable in prevailing market conditions. Market evidence suggests that developers will react more positively to sites where details of potential abnormal and consolidation costs are presented up-front.

## **3. Proposals**

- 3.1 An informed revision of the Masterplan will provide an opportunity to review the parcelling of land to reflect current and medium term market conditions.

- 3.2 Through targeted intrusive site investigations, a revised infrastructure requirement will be developed and designed to identify smaller, more cost effective parcels for housing development. The reduced level of abnormal development costs coupled with a fresh approach to layout and design of housing will maximise the potential financial return from new development parcels. It is projected that there may be a reduction of some 8 - 10 acres of net development, but that increased efficiency within these areas will minimise abnormal development costs and maximise net developable area. Proposals will be brought forward to deal with areas which are no longer suitable for hard end use developments.
- 3.3 A revised sales strategy will be developed based on the refreshed Masterplan and associated costs of delivery.
- 3.4 An outline reinvestment plan for capital receipts will be developed looking at potential use of receipts to fund on-site infrastructure and to develop a fund to improve marketability and attract partnership funding.
- 3.5 The annual breakdown of funding is identified below. The first two years of funding will facilitate the delivery of a revised Masterplan and associated strategies. It will cover the cost of site investigations and associated reporting, the results of which will inform design and will be used to develop a more current cost effective approach for development of Montgomerie Park. Specialist engineering, Masterplanning and marketing advisors will assist in the delivery of the revised Masterplan and identify infrastructure and marketing strategies which will precede delivery of physical works. Years 3 and 4 will focus on the delivery of physical infrastructure and the marketing of housing sites in phase 2 of the development.
- 3.6 The Cabinet is invited to agree:-
- a. to approve the programme of works and associated expenditure to deliver a revised Masterplan for the development and sale of sites within Montgomerie Park with associated infrastructure;
  - b. that further site investigations be undertaken to inform the revised Masterplan;
  - c. to a review of the approach to marketing new development parcels designed to improve the viability of and marketability of sites;
  - d. to the development of an ongoing programme to include the preparation of associated infrastructure design, marketing particulars and management strategy for the undeveloped land;

- e. that an outline reinvestment plan for capital receipts from the development be used as an infrastructure fund to improve marketability and attract partnership funding; and
- f. to receive the revised plan and proposals to a future meeting of the Cabinet for approval.

#### **4. Implications**

##### Financial Implications

- 4.1 Funding is required initially for a period of four years the costs spread over four years amounts to £1,605,000 with the bulk of the funding in years 3 and 4 to deliver a new site access from Long Drive. Year 1: £250,000; Year 2: £55,000; Year 3: £650,000; Year 4: £650,000. The required funding will be generated from the receipts from the sale of site 2 which are currently estimated to be £2.5m over the next six years with an anticipated profile that will meet planned expenditure. The reinvestment of £1.6m into Montgomerie Park will secure receipts from later phases of the development. Costs will be monitored and reviewed annually.

##### Human Resource Implications

- 4.2 There are no Human Resource Implications.

##### Legal Implications

- 4.3 There are no Legal Implications.

##### Equality Implications

- 4.4 There are no Equality Implications.

##### Environmental Implications

- 4.5 There are no Environmental Implications.

##### Implications for Key Priorities

- 4.6 Successful development will stimulate investment, create employment locally and bring regeneration benefits to the wider area. The proposal also meets the following Council priorities:

Single Outcome Agreement : Outcomes and Indicators: -

- 2a More people are in work and training;
- 10 We live in well designed places;
- 10c The condition of roads, footways, path networks and lighting has improved;
- 12 Our environment is enhanced.

- 4.7 Interim 2 and Interim 3: NAC Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy: Driving the Regeneration of our towns and continuing to invest in a 3-year programme of regeneration projects.

Community Benefit Implications

- 4.8 Standard Council requirements to introduce training opportunities into contracts delivery on-site actions will be incorporated into tendering packages.

**5. Consultations**

- 5.1 The Montgomerie Park Steering Group comprising representatives from all Council Services and CPAG have been consulted. In addition the Head of Finance and Property has been consulted.

**6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 It is important to keep the profile of North Ayrshire as a viable development location. The review will secure continued development activity not only within Montgomerie Park but also within the Irvine area. It will generate local employment, support other business growth by ensuring provision of housing range and choice and secure future receipts for the Council.

- 6.2 The new guidance (Designing Places and Designing Streets) presents an opportunity to review routes through the next phases of Montgomerie Park to create connected vibrant "spaces and places". The importance of bringing a local distinctiveness and visual quality encourages social and economic activity which together promote the creation of a community. It affords the opportunity to review the realistic extent of the developable area, maximise potential receipts and ensure that monitoring of market conditions will deliver sites for sale in an informed and cost effective manner.



CRAIG HATTON  
Corporate Director (Development and Environment)

Reference : CH/ST/LB

For further information please contact Sandra Taylor, Planning Officer,  
Development Planning on 01294 324776

**Background Papers**

nil





DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS



All areas noted are to be considered to be approximate or thereby.

Overall site boundary indicated thus ---

Individual housing site boundary indicated thus ---

Individual other use site boundary indicated thus ---

SS / GG = Substation / Gas Governor

MONTGOMERIE PARK IRVINE







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## **NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **Agenda Item 6**

**12 March 2013**

#### **Cabinet**

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**Subject:** **Upper Garnock Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme Progress Report**

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**Purpose:** To inform the Cabinet on the progress of the development of the Upper Garnock Flood Mitigation Scheme.

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**Recommendation:** That the Cabinet agrees to (a) note the progress made to date of the two options; (b) note the current cost of the two options; (c) approve further work to be undertaken to refine the costings for a broader range of options; and (d) approve the proposed exhibition for residents in the Garnock Valley on 21 and 22 March.

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#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Under the Flood Risk Management Act 2009, the Council is responsible for identifying flood risk areas and for developing sustainable flood management options to form flood mitigation schemes. The upper Garnock Flood Risk Management Strategy was approved by the former Executive on 6 December 2011. This strategy identified that the levels of current flood protection for the Upper Garnock Valley (Kilbirnie, Glengarnock and Dalry area) are only sufficient for a 1 in 15 year event, which is substantially lower than the Scottish Government recommended minimum level of 1 in 75 years. In a theoretical 1 in 200 year flood event, 341 residential properties, 1 supermarket, 3 commercial buildings, 26 industrial properties, 5 community facilities, 1 nursery and 1 primary school would be at risk.
- 1.2 The strategy identified that a full flood mitigation scheme providing protection to all properties within the 1 in 200 year flood envelope should be considered.

## **2. Current Position**

- 2.1 North Ayrshire Council put forward a submission to the Scottish Government to obtain a Flood Prevention Order (FPO) and secure 80% match funding on the 12 December 2011 for a project valued at approximately £21.4m. This submission was based on the preliminary findings of the Flood Risk Management Strategy for a scheme offering protection of 1 in 200 plus climate change. However, as a result of changes brought about by the introduction of new guidance issued by the Scottish Government to obtain an FPO and associated match funding, North Ayrshire Council's submission was unsuccessful.
- 2.2 Submissions are required to demonstrate that a robust public consultation process has been conducted on outline designs for a range of options and deliver a minimum positive cost/benefit ratio of 1.0.
- 2.3 The change to the process for obtaining an FPO and funding from the Scottish Government has had a detrimental impact on the timescales associated with the project. Therefore, substantial community resilience has been supported by the Council in lieu of the implementation of any major flood mitigation works. A CCTV system to monitor river levels has been installed to provide advance warning of any flood event, with the data made available on the North Ayrshire website. Assistance has also been provided to help vulnerable areas in the form of air vent covers purchased and installed to North Ayrshire Council properties within the 1 in 200 year flood envelope and flood sacks being distributed for residents.
- 2.4 To date, four projects have been successful in obtaining FPOs and associated funding to allow their projects to proceed to the construction phase. Two of these projects are within Scottish Borders Council with the remaining two being in Moray and Highland Councils.
- 2.5 Information from the Scottish Government indicates that there is a total of £11.7m remaining to be allocated within this current spending review period (2012-2015) for projects across Scotland. Accordingly even if the Council were successful in any submission to undertake a full Flood Mitigation Scheme there is insufficient funding available to deliver a full scheme before 2015.

### 3. Proposals

- 3.1 Consultants were appointed by the Council to produce outline designs that would allow the associated cost/benefit ratios to be identified which would allow schemes to be consulted upon and considered by the Council. Significant work has been undertaken which has involved conducting a number of in-depth surveys and studies including environmental surveys, geotechnical site investigations, structural condition surveys and initial land searches. The site investigation works included both desktop and on-site works which required the drilling of some fifty boreholes to test the ground to provide engineering recommendations for the design of the flood prevention structures.
- 3.2 An integrated 1/2 Dimensional ISIS mathematical model was completed by consultants, which replicates the River Garnock hydrology in its current state. The model was calibrated based on the most recent flood event of August 2008. Sensitivity testing was also undertaken to improve confidence.
- 3.3 Based on the topography and river hydrology of the Upper Garnock Valley, two options have been identified that can form the basis of scheme to be consulted upon:

**Option 1:** This requires direct defences in the form of flood walls and mounds to be constructed to protect residential and commercial land and property at risk of flooding. The improved defences require high river walls which raise potential aesthetic issues, particularly in respect of the value of the watercourse, access for educational and recreational functions and the development of the towns.

**Option 2:** This option is a combination of raised defences with an upstream flood storage designed into the system to capture and reduce the impact of high flows of the River Garnock. Flood storage can be provided to the east of Kilbirnie, in the land bordered by Dipple Road in the west and the disused railway in the east. The upstream storage area would receive high flows from the River Garnock (over 1 in 50 year flood volume) via a newly constructed water canal, that would only be used during extreme levels of rainfall. The flood water would be discharged back to the River Garnock via the Dipple Burn after each event without keeping a permanent water body.

- 3.4 Option 2 has the advantage of reducing the wall heights within the towns while ensuring the correct protection level from flooding. It could be viewed as a softer, more environmentally friendly option, creating seasonal wetland.

- 3.5 Initial costs of the two outline designs offering protection for a 1 in 200 year plus climate change flooding event have identified an investment requirement of approximately £30m for option 1 and £32m for option 2. Both of these options contain an outline estimate of £2.5m for the replacement of Kirkland bridge. These figures are significantly higher than the £21.4m identified in the Strategy Report in December 2011 due primarily to a revised view of the investment requirement in the utilities infrastructure of the affected areas. These new estimates may render these options unaffordable. However, these estimates still need to be refined in order to provide a more accurate assessment of likely costs.
- 3.6 Furthermore, the cost/benefit analysis currently indicates a figure close to the considered minimum acceptable ratio of 1 and as such, these options may not compare favourably to other Local Authority schemes competing to secure funding. It is, therefore, prudent that other options are considered including, for example, reducing the level of protection from the proposed current maximum (1 in 200 year flood even plus climate change) to an option which provides protection of a 1 in 100 year flood event.
- 3.7 Given the public interest in this scheme, it is proposed to hold a two day exhibition on 21 and 22 March along with a 28-day period of time after to ascertain the views of the affected residents within the Garnock Valley area.
- 3.8 These views will then be fed into the continued refinement of the option appraisals prior to presenting a complete analysis for Cabinet consideration. A full formal consultation would have to be undertaken prior to any final decision and approval of the preferred option.
- 3.9 The Cabinet is invited to note the progress made to date of the two options; note the current cost of the two options; approve further work to be undertaken to refine the costings for a broader range of options; and approve the proposed exhibition for residents in the Garnock Valley on 21 and 22 March 2013.

#### **4. Implications**

##### Financial Implications

- 4.1 The level of financial investment will depend on the option that will be presented to Cabinet in due course.

## Human Resource Implications

- 4.2 None

## Legal Implications

- 4.3 The Council is required to address the responsibilities to undertake statutory obligation as identified in the FRM Act. If the preferred option is the flood storage option (Option 2) land acquisition or other compensation arrangement with the land owner will have to be considered.

## Equality Implications

- 4.4 Equality Implications Assessment will be carried out during the public consultation period.

## Environmental Implications

- 4.5 The Environmental Screening process identified that an EIA was not required as part of the project. However, environmental and ecological studies have been carried out as part of the project to ensure compliance with existing statutory regulations and any additional environmental implications will be dealt with as the project progresses.

## Implications for Key Priorities

- 4.6 The project aligns with the Councils Corporate objectives is a key SOA priority.

## Community Benefit Implications

- 4.7 The project will provide both economic and physical benefits to the community.

## **5. Consultations**

- 5.1 Consultations with stakeholders and utility suppliers (NAC Planning/Access Officers, SEPA, SNH, RSPP, Futurescapes, Scottish Water, ScotiaGas Networks, Scottish Power, BT/Openreach etc.) are ongoing.

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 The Upper Garnock Flood Prevention Scheme is progressing. Two options are currently being explored, with environmental surveys, geotechnical site investigations, structural condition surveys and initial land searches having all been completed. However, costs are currently estimated to be significantly in excess of those indicated in the initial approval in December 2011 and the cost benefit analysis is indicating a level close to the considered minimum acceptable level. Further work is required to refine costings and to undertake cost/benefit appraisals on a wider range of options.
- 6.2 In order to update residents of the Garnock Valley, a two day event is proposed to ascertain views on the emerging proposals.



**CRAIG HATTON**  
Corporate Director (Development and Environment)

Reference : CH/JS/CH

For further information please contact Joe Smith (Senior Manager Roads & Transportation) on telephone number 01294 225203

### **Background Papers**

nil

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## **NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **Agenda Item 7**

**12 March 2013**

#### **Cabinet**

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**Subject:** **Write off of Tenant Rent Arrears**

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**Purpose:** To advise Cabinet on tenant rent arrears and court costs and to seek approval to write-off irrecoverable amounts.

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**Recommendation:** That Cabinet approves the write-offs totalling £36,502.09, as detailed in Section 2 of the report.

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#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Rent arrears, and associated court costs, for former tenants of Council houses accumulate for a variety of reasons, such as tenants abandoning the house, eviction, imprisonment, or death. In these circumstances, arrears can eventually be deemed to be irrecoverable.
- 1.2 In terms of the Council's Financial Regulations (Code of Financial Practice 3) relating to the control of income, individual arrears of under £1,000 can be written off with the approval of the Corporate Director (Finance & Corporate Support) after consultation with the Chief Executive.
- 1.3 Arrears of £1,000 and over can only be written off following approval by Elected Members.

#### **2. Current Position**

- 2.1 Reports are submitted twice yearly to Committee, seeking Members' approval to write off rent arrears. This is the second report to be presented to Cabinet for financial year 2012/13.
- 2.2 The first report, seeking authority to write off rent arrears for 2012/13, was presented to Cabinet on 20 November 2012. That report identified £119,726.33 of rent arrears and £27,079.16 of court costs, to be written off at that time and advised that £102,192.73 had already been written off by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support), after consultation with the Chief Executive. Cabinet consequently approved the write off of the remaining £44,612.76.

- 2.3 Rent arrears of £970,928 were outstanding as at 31 January 2013, with £64,282.27 now deemed to be irrecoverable. A further £8,008.50 of court costs were also deemed to be irrecoverable, i.e. a total of £72,290.77. The proposed rent write-off of £64,282.27 represents 0.15% of the Council's budgeted house rent income for 2012/13 and 23.1% of the budget available to meet the cost of write-offs in the year.
- 2.4 In accordance with the Code of Practice, £35,788.68 has been written off with the approval of the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support), after consultation with the Chief Executive. The remaining £36,502.09, relating to tenants with total balances owed of £1,000 or more, requires the approval of Cabinet for write off.
- 2.5 The balance of £36,502.09, noted above, relates to Tenant accounts that have been pursued by Legal Services and all avenues currently open to them have been exhausted, or the individual concerned has been sequestered.
- 2.6 Members should note that the total proposed rent write-off for 2012/13 is therefore £184,008.60, including those arrears which were written off in November, as outlined at section 2.2 above. The HRA Revenue budget for 2012/13 includes a provision of £278,149 to meet the cost of rent write offs in the year.
- 2.7 The Welfare Reform Working Group will track changes to benefit entitlements, which may impact adversely on the level of rent arrears and subsequent write off . This will be monitored to identify issues at the earliest opportunity, minimising the impact on residents, the Council's rent collection levels and delivery of the Housing Business Plan.

### **3. Proposals**

- 3.1 It is proposed that Cabinet agrees to write off balances in excess of £1,000, per tenant, totalling £36,502.09.

### **4. Implications**

#### Financial Implications

- 4.1 The Housing Revenue Account budget for 2012/13 includes sufficient provision to meet the cost of the total proposed rent write-off, as outlined within this report.
- 4.2 Whilst these sums may be written off, every effort will be made to continue to pursue for recovery, if new information becomes available.



#### Human Resource Implications

- 4.3 There are no Human Resource implications arising from this report.

#### Legal Implications

- 4.4 There are no Legal implications arising from this report.

#### Equality Implications

- 4.5 There are no Equality implications arising from this report.

#### Environmental Implications

- 4.6 There are no Environmental implications arising from this report.

#### Implications for Key Priorities

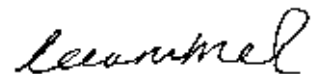
- 4.7 There are no implications for key priorities arising from this report.

### **5. Consultations**

- 5.1 The Head of Community Care and Housing has been consulted on this matter and supports the proposed action.

### **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 There are certain arrears which are considered to be irrecoverable, for a wide variety of reasons and it is recommended that Cabinet exercises its powers to write these off on the understanding that, if new information comes to light, the debts will be pursued.



LAURA FRIEL  
Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support)

#### Reference :

For further information please contact Keith MacDonald, Management Accountant on telephone number 01294 324511

#### **Background Papers**

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## **NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **Agenda Item 8**

**12 March 2013**

#### **Cabinet**

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**Subject:** **Proposed Tree and Woodlands Management Policy**

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**Purpose:** To seek the views of the Cabinet in respect of a Tree and Woodland Management Policy.

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**Recommendation:** That the Cabinet approves the Tree and Woodland Management Policy attached at Appendix 1.

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#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Council is responsible for many thousands of trees and over 275 hectares of woodlands within its area. There are a number of legal obligations in both Common Law and Statute placed upon the Council in the management of trees and woodlands for which it is responsible.
- 1.2 The Council receives a number of enquiries in respect of trees within its area. There is currently no formal policy setting down how the Council will discharge its responsibilities and manage its tree and woodland stock in a sustainable manner.
- 1.3 Trees and woodland have a significant beneficial effect upon the quality of life within the area. They provide environmental, aesthetic and amenity value and support the Council's wider strategic objectives of re-generation, improved health and educational attainment. However people often live in close proximity to trees which can cause varying degrees of inconvenience.

#### **2. Current Position**

- 2.1 The proposed Tree and Woodland Management Policy, attached at Appendix 1 was considered by the Environment and Infrastructure Policy Board at its meeting of 3 September 2012, 3 December 2012 and on 18 February 2013.
- 2.2 The policy has been amended to reflect comments received at the Policy Board in relation to monitoring and reporting on tree and woodland management activities, complaints received and subsequent actions taken.

2.3 The Policy Board also requested that a decision review process be developed and incorporated into the proposed Policy.

2.4 The proposed Tree and Woodland Management Policy is attached at Appendix 1 for consideration.

### **3. Proposals**

3.1 That the Cabinet approves the Tree and Woodland Management Policy attached at Appendix 1.

### **4. Implications**

#### Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications.

#### Human Resource Implications

4.2 There are no human resources implications.

#### Legal Implications

4.3 There are a number of legal responsibilities and duties upon the Council in the management of its tree and woodland stock.

#### Equality Implications

4.4 There are no equality implications.

#### Environmental Implications

4.5 Tree and woodlands provide a significant contribution to the environmental well-being of the area.

#### Implications for Key Priorities

4.6 Effective tree and woodland management positively contributes to a significant number of key priorities.

### **5. Consultations**

5.1 Consultation took place with Planning, Legal, Countryside Ranger Service, Roads, Housing Services and Finance & Risk Management Services in the preparation of the policy. Members of the Policy Board have noted the content of the policy as submitted to Cabinet for their consideration and approval.

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 The Tree and Woodland Management Policy sets down the Council's approach to the effective and sustainable management of these assets.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CH', is positioned above a horizontal line.

**CRAIG HATTON**  
Corporate Director (Development and Environment)

Reference : RM/DW/II

For further information please contact Donald Wilson, Streetscene Manager on telephone number 01294 541546

### **Background Papers**

Policy Board papers.



**North Ayrshire Council  
Tree and Woodland Management Policy**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Trees are an essential asset and yet at the same time can be seen as being highly emotive, both in terms of perceived nuisance and of the benefit they provide. They can form important local landmarks and landscape features whilst making a tremendous impact on visitors and residents alike, providing significant aesthetic, amenity, economic and ecological benefits and help contribute to a healthier environment.
- 1.2 The Council is responsible for many thousands of trees and over 275 hectares of woodland within the area. A programme of assessment and inspection has commenced although given the number and extent of trees within the area it is anticipated that this will take many years to complete.
- 1.3 There are a number of legal obligations in both Common Law and in Statute upon the Council in the management of trees and woodlands for which it is responsible.
- 1.4 The aim of this policy to set out how the Council will effectively manage trees and woodlands for which it is responsible ensuring that they positively contribute to the area and achievement of the corporate priorities of the Council whilst meeting legal obligations. The policy does not consider trees within private ownership unless the Council has a legislative responsibility or power in respect of their management.

**2. Effective Tree and Woodland Management**

- 2.1 The Council seeks to manage its trees and woodland in an effective manner in the following ways:-
  - Providing and maintaining healthy and safe trees.
  - Maintaining and encouraging bio-diversity.
  - Maintaining and improving landscape quality via the care of existing trees and the inclusion of future plantings.
  - Compliance with legal responsibilities in both Common Law and through Statute.
  - Effectively communicating, educating and engaging with the public and local communities.
  - Providing clear channels of advice and information to the public and other Council services regarding arboriculture.

- Managing its woodlands in accordance with the Ayrshire and Arran Woodland Strategy.

### **3. The Importance of Trees**

3.1 Trees are of vital importance to the landscape. They are living and dynamic structures that, dependent up on species and location, can live for generations. They are widely appreciated for enhancing rural and urban environments and make a positive contribution to the scenic character and diversity of the landscape. However the benefits they attach to the environment greatly extend beyond perceived visual amenity and include:-

- Social, educational and, communal benefits through connecting people with nature.
- Embellish and reduce the impact of building development and hard landscaping.
- Environmental benefits such as carbon sequestration, improved air quality, screening from sun, wind and rain, filtering noise and attracting wildlife.
- Provide and indirect economical benefits, e.g. adding value to property and reduced energy costs (windbreaks).
- Reduce surface water run-off and the effects of soil erosion
- Green and leafy industrial sites, retail and/or shopping areas attract more inward investment than similar areas and sites devoid of trees.
- Crime levels have been shown to be lower in leafy areas than those in areas devoid of trees.
- Contribute to human physical and mental health and relaxation
- Provide a sustainable resource

### **3. Tree Related Issues**

3.1 People often live in close proximity to trees, particularly in urban areas, which can create varying degrees of inconvenience. These trees are either their own, their neighbours' or quite commonly belong to the Council. Conflict or disputes can arise where a tree or group of trees make an important contribution to the local environment, yet create inconvenience to residents. There are a number of common sources of complaint including:-

- Size and spread of tree canopy
- Branches overhanging into gardens and the highway
- Low branches over footpaths
- Trees blocking natural light, street lights and road signs
- Leaf and fruit fall
- Sticky deposits
- Physical damage to structures
- Interference with utilities



- Affecting TV and satellite reception
- Affecting CCTV and security systems
- Obscuring a view
- Highway safety issues
- Fear of tree safety
- Birds and wildlife

3.2 Complaints often arise as a result of inappropriate species selection in the past where trees increase in size until they reach maturity. In these cases it may be difficult or impossible to resolve in all parties' favour.

## **4. Trees on Council Land**

### **4.1 Parks, Open Spaces and Cemeteries**

Trees are fundamental aspects of parks and open spaces as they can provide high levels of visual amenity and are valuable in encouraging use of these sites by residents and visitors alike. Parks are ideal for tree planting as there are relative few conflicts and species that would be unsuitable elsewhere can be grown here.

Cemeteries and churchyards often contain large specimen trees that were planted out when these sites were first developed and can offer a sense of calm for visitors.

These areas are sanctuaries for wildlife and the existing trees are often of historic or of great personal value to local communities. The many decorative mature trees are characteristics of many sites providing excellent flora and fauna values.

### **4.2 Council Housing Areas**

A large proportion of the Council's Housing stock was built in line with the new town concept, particularly within the Irvine area. Extensive planting of both trees and shrubs was undertaken both in garden areas and in the surrounding open space using a wide range of species. These were often quick growing to provide rapid greening including shrub beds and group planting. Many trees were planted close to houses without full consideration of future growth potential. The maturing of these trees has given rise to a number of complaints from residents who live in close proximity.

Complaints or enquiries from tenants regarding trees within their gardens will be dealt with by the Housing Service with appropriate reference to the Arboriculture Officer.

### **4.3 Highways**

Highway trees are those growing in pavements and verges along the Council's highway network and are the responsibility of the Council. The Council is not responsible for trees alongside major trunk roads or private roads and footpaths.

Highway trees are extremely important as they help to filter traffic pollution and help to provide shade to car-parking and pedestrian passage. A tree-lined street will improve the aesthetic and amenity appearance of a street itself. The Council values highway planting as it presents a real opportunity to improve environmental quality and image. However consideration should be given to the location of trees in relation to roads, windows to the front of properties, overhead telephone wires, underground services, sight lines, lighting, traffic controls and signs. The roots of trees can also potentially cause problems with footpaths surfaces. Where a tree (or trees) on Council owned or adopted land is deemed to be a danger to road users or pedestrians, or is causing an obstruction, the Council will take steps to make the tree(s) safe or remove the obstruction.

Where a tree on privately owned land is considered to be a danger to road users or pedestrians the Council's Roads Service will attempt to contact the owner in order to remove the risk or obstruction. If there is no immediate danger the Roads Service can serve notice on the owner requiring them to undertake the necessary works within 28 days. Where the owner fails to comply with the notice the Council are empowered to carry out the necessary works and recover expenses reasonably incurred from the owner. Where in the Council's opinion the danger from the tree is imminent then there is no requirement to serve a notice and the Council can carry out the necessary works and recover expenses reasonably incurred from the owner.

### **4.4 Woodlands**

The Council is responsible for over 275 hectares of woodland. They provide significant biodiversity and wildlife value, as the ground flora, lower plant, fungi and invertebrate populations within them have developed over many years and are specialised to that environment. The long established nature of these woodlands is reflected by the large amount self-seeded trees that are often densely located leading to poor quality or weak specimens.

The Ayrshire and Arran Woodland Strategy seeks to develop the woodland of Ayrshire and Arran as a model of integrated and sustainable use of land that supports the local economy and contributes to the community wellbeing and that also promotes environmental excellence.

Whilst being mindful of this Strategy the Council's primary objective is to ensure that all its woodlands are enhanced and sustained on a long term basis with the involvement and support of local communities and schools co-ordinated through the Countryside Ranger Service. Amongst other improvement works and where resources allow the Council will seek to undertake appropriate thinning works to encourage improved tree growth and the quality of specimens. Effective maintenance works will support the development of a range of woodlands that can be used for public recreational use, wildlife habitat and for educational purposes and the Council's local Bio-diversity Action Plan.

The creation of woodland paths has been utilised to encourage the public to visit woodlands improving access to nature and the outdoors.

## **5. Trees on Private Land**

- 5.1 The greatest proportion of trees are located upon privately owned land. Other than where Council has a specific legislative responsibility such as the administration of Tree Preservation Orders and within Conservation Areas maintenance and management rests entirely with the landowner who has a duty of care under Common Law.
- 5.2 The Council will not undertake any works to privately owned trees unless it has a legislative responsibility or power or in emergency situations where the owner cannot be identified and located. In these situations the Council will seek to recover any costs incurred from the owner.

## **6. The Council's Planning Responsibilities**

- 6.1 The responsibilities of the Council as the Local Planning Authority are set out in the Town and Country (Scotland) Planning Act 1997, the Planning etc. (Scotland Act) 2006 and the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation Order and Trees in Conservation Areas (Scotland) Regulations 2010 (SSI 2010/434).
- 6.2 In granting planning permission for any development the Council must ensure that appropriate provision is made, by the impositions of conditions, for the preservation or planting of trees. Such conditions can be the subject of appeal or an application to vary the condition. Non-compliance with any condition imposed can be the subject of enforcement action.
- 6.3 There are 54 Tree Preservation Orders in force at present within the area of the Council. The Council has a duty to review from time to time existing tree preservation orders. A Tree Preservation Order (TPO) may be made if it appears to the Council to be:
  - expedient in the interest of amenity and/or,

- that the trees, groups of trees or woodlands are of cultural or historical significance.

Owners, lessees and occupiers of land affected by a proposed TPO have the right to make objections prior to confirmation.

- 6.4 Prior to the commencement of any works to trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order application must be made to the Council. Where a tree is not protected by TPO but is within a Conservation Area notice must be given to the Council at least 6 weeks prior to the commencement of any work. Where protected trees have been removed the Council will normally require the planting of replacements.

## **7. Inspection of Trees**

- 7.1 Inspection of trees is currently undertaken in response to service requests or complaints as they are received. It is not practicable to formally inspect all trees where service requests or complaints are received. As a general rule site inspections will not be undertaken in response to enquiries relating to nuisance value. In these instances advice will be provided to enquirers in line with this policy.

- 7.2 A pro-active programme of inspection is being developed utilising a risk based approach to identify priority. The criteria utilised to establish priority includes tree location in relation to highways, footpaths, built structures, high or frequently used areas etc. The programme of inspection is primarily concerned with health and safety, identifying foreseeable risks and hazards commonly associated with trees, rather than aesthetic or amenity value. Inspection will consider the presence of the following:-

- Tree canopy die-back
- Deadwood
- Fungal and/or fruiting body associations
- Root-plate heave
- Stem cavities or decay
- Included bark unions
- Previous branch failure points
- Tree canopy touching adjoining buildings, obscuring signage/street lights/CCTV.
- Low branches or tree canopy obstruction over roads and footpaths

## **8. Felling and Pruning of Trees**

- 8.1 Where inspection either re-active or planned identifies that a tree constitutes a hazard or is unsafe action will be taken as soon as

practicably possible to undertake appropriate works. Examples of circumstances that require immediate action include:-

- The tree is unstable, uprooted and is leaning in the direction of property or areas of public access. The level of risk and the degree of urgency required to address the problem will be dependent on the target type (the public, vehicles, buildings, footpaths and roads, as examples) and frequency of use, size of the tree, extent of root-lift and current and forecasted weather conditions.
- The tree has hung up limbs that if were to become detached would cause harm or damage to public or property.
- The tree is blocking a part of the Council's highway network.
- The tree has fallen and is preventing the natural flow of a watercourse.
- The tree has fallen and is blocking access to property.
- The tree has fallen onto property or vehicles.

8.2 Other than where a tree presents a hazard or forms part of a woodland management plan there is a general presumption against the removal or pruning of trees which are healthy but subject to complaint unless the basis of the complaint is an overriding justification and no alternative management practice can be implemented.

8.3 Where it has been decided that works are required to trees consideration will be given to maintain the value and health of the tree.

8.4 In the first instance consideration will be given to pruning. However, excessive pruning or reducing a tree's size can adversely affect the health, appearance and amenity value of the tree, as well as resulting in weakly attached re-growth. Examples of where pruning is appropriate include:-

- Minor works.
- To improve the growth and establishment of adjacent trees.
- To prevent or rectify direct or indirect physical damage to buildings, structures and public utilities where practical and accessible
- Formative pruning of any newly planted trees
- To improve the health and condition of existing trees, e.g. crown cleaning.
- As part of woodland or screen thinning operations

8.5 In those instances where pruning is not considered appropriate the tree will be felled, once any appropriate permissions/consents have been secured. Felling/Removal will be considered, generally, in the following instances:

- The tree is dead, dying or diseased and presents an unacceptable degree of risk to persons or property.

- The tree is uprooted or wind-thrown and presents an unacceptable degree of risk to persons or property.
- The tree is causing damage to buildings, structures or public amenities.
- Regeneration of woodland (clear felling) and landscaped areas.
- To improve the growth and establishment of adjacent trees, e.g. woodland thinning.
- To facilitate works by statutory undertakers.
- Where pruning is not practical.

## **9. Subsidence and Drains**

- 9.1 Where trees are believed to be causing subsidence to a property, including damage to drains, the claimant will be required to provide supporting expert evidence, usually through their property insurers. All enquiries and any subsequent claims will be passed to the Council's Finance and Risk Management Service.

## **10. Large Trees, Overhanging Branches and Root Encroachments**

- 10.1 Under **Common Law** in Scotland there is no legal duty on the owner of a tree to cut or prune trees within their land or property.
- 10.2 Large trees especially where growing near to property can cause concern to people who live near or in close proximity to them. The size of a tree is not reason enough to prune or fell a tree. Such measures could adversely affect the amenity value of the site, over-expose adjacent trees to prevailing wind or cause irreversible damage to the tree where pruning has occurred. Accordingly large trees will not be pruned or felled unless they present a safety issue or a hazard to the public or property.
- 10.3 The Council will not undertake works to trees that overhang adjacent land unless the tree or overhanging branches present a safety issue or part of the tree is in contact with any building within that land. Under Common Law affected land owners can prune any overhanging growth providing the cuts are made on their side of the boundary. The arisings legally belong to the owner of the tree and must be returned to them unless they have given permission to keep or dispose of them.

## **11. Light, TV and Satellite Reception, Views and General Nuisance.**

- 11.1 Issues of lack of light or absence of, or poor, TV/Satellite reception, medical ailments and loss of views can be highly emotive. These issues generally occur over time as a tree matures but in some instances can be immediate if new developments or newly installed aerial/satellite equipment is situated in an inappropriate location. As a

general rule the Council will not carry out tree pruning or removal works directly attributable to:

- Loss or interference with TV or satellite signal reception
- Restriction of sunlight or artificial lighting, unless adjudges to excessive.
- Blocking or obstructing a view from a residence
- Medical ailments unless supported by expert medical opinion. The Council reserves the right to challenge such opinion.

11.2 As a general rule the Council will not carry out tree pruning or removal works in direct response to natural or seasonal events, for example:

- Falling leaves
- Sap exudation (honeydew)
- Falling fruits/nuts
- Bird droppings
- Blossom
- Reduction or increase moisture within gardens
- Basal stem sucker growth
- Germinating seeds from trees
- Blockages or obstructions from tree deposits and leaves
- Presence of algae and/or build up of moss.

11.3 Incidents of this nature are considered minor inconveniences as opposed to legally defined nuisance issues. Only in exceptional circumstances, and when all other potential solutions have been exhausted, will tree pruning or removal be considered. Examples of potential alternative solutions include:-

- Slippery road and path surfaces arising from leaf or fruit fall should be reported to the Streetscene Service who will arrange for those areas that are formally adopted by the Council to be swept.
- Anti-social behaviour arising from fruit fall should be reported to the Police or the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour team.
- Leaf and/or fruit fall within private gardens can be deposited within the 'brown' garden waste bin collected by the Waste Management service.
- Re-location or use of extension poles for aerials and satellite receivers.

11.4 Land owners are able to exercise their rights under common law in respect of any over hanging branches or encroachments and will be advised of these.

## **12. Poisonous Trees**

- 12.1 Any works undertaken in respect of poisonous trees will be based on the level of risk relating to each individual case. Factors for consideration will include the level, nature and frequency of site usage, level of toxicity, position of berries and seeds, etc on the tree and any alternative means of addressing/managing the problem, such as regular uplift of fruit fall.

## **13. Trees with Thorns**

- 13.1 Where trees bear thorns or spines that pose a hazard to the public, action will be taken to remove the part of the tree most likely to cause harm. Influencing factors on the action taken will include the level, nature and frequency of site usage, the setting of the site, the effect of pruning on the tree and, alternative means of managing the problem, e.g. replanting the tree in a more suitable location.

## **14. Wildlife/Insects**

- 14.1 Trees will not be pruned or felled to remove any animal protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, other appropriate Protected Species legislation, or to remove insects such as wasps bees or midges. In the case of pests advice should be sought from the Environmental Health service.
- 14.2 Where birds are found to be nesting, tree work will be postponed until the end of the nesting season, other than where there is an immediate risk to safety.
- 14.3 Where trees have been identified as a roosting site for bats, work will not be carried out until an assessment has been undertaken by an appropriately qualified practitioner or Scottish Natural Heritage, other than where there is an immediate risk to safety.
- 14.4 Where possible, safe to do so and in appropriate areas arboriculture practices will be used to create wildlife habitats. This may include practices such as:-
- Retaining dead standing trees as nature habitats, preferring to prune rather than fell.
  - Leave in situ ant dead or felled trees in order to create wildlife habitats

## **15. Public Utilities and Close Circuit Television (CCTV)**

- 15.1 CCTV systems should be erected clear of any trees to enable a clear view of the areas covered. Where subsequent tree growth obscures all



or part of public CCTV systems appropriate works will be undertaken to maintain the original level of coverage.

- 15.2 Where trees are in contact with or threaten public utilities appropriate pruning, or where necessary felling, works will be undertaken. In all cases works will seek to retain the value of the tree.

## **16. Vandalism and Anti-Social Behaviour**

- 16.1 Where it is claimed that trees are contributing to anti-social behaviour or crime the enquirer will be passed to the Police or the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team. Only in exceptional cases and where the written support of either the Police or Anti-Social Behaviour team is provided will appropriate works be undertaken.
- 16.2 Any work undertaken to a Council owned tree, unless it is overhanging or encroaching upon a private property, will be considered as vandalism and will be reported to the Police accordingly.

## **17. Tree Planting**

- 17.1 The Council aims to create a wide, varied and sustainable tree stock. New tree planting can open up opportunities to increase age and species diversity and improve the local landscape. To achieve this it will plant new and replacement trees, where appropriate opportunity arises, to ensure continuous tree cover, with priority being given to native species.
- 17.2 Before reaching a decision as to whether a new or replacement tree/s are to be planted the Council will take into account the following considerations:
- Will the new or replacement tree/s be of public benefit?
  - Is there sufficient room for a new tree/s to grow and develop without causing future problems?
  - Is there a deficit of trees in the area?
  - Was the removed tree part of a local feature or of historical significance?
  - What species is appropriate for the site?
- 17.3 All new planting will be carried out as part of the winter works programme, more specifically during the period November to February.
- 17.4 When planning a planting programme for open spaces within community areas local community groups will be consulted wherever possible.

## **18 Review of Decisions**

- 18.1 If where customers are aggrieved with decisions taken in implementing this policy, a review will be carried out in accordance with the 2 stage process outlined below:

### **Stage 1 – Frontline**

The customer can speak to the Streetscene Manager either in Person or by telephone who will attempt to resolve the matter quickly. The customer can also contact the Council through the Contact Centre on 0845 603 0594 or write or send comments electronically using the “Contact Us” facility on our website.

### **Stage 2 – Investigation**

If the complainant is unhappy with the response from the Streetscene Manager, the Head of Environment & Related Services (EARS) will either investigate the complaint or appoint an officer to investigate the matter on his behalf.

The complainant will receive a written response from the Head of Environment & Related Services confirming the outcome of the review, together with reasons for the decision within 20 working days of the review request being received.

## **19. Monitoring & Reporting**

- 19.1 An annual report will be provided on an annual basis commencing September 2013 detailing the number of complaints received, any emergency works carried out, complaints received concerning health and safety with regards to trees, storm damage to trees, number of satellite dishes that were moved because of obstruction of the signal by trees, how many trees were felled and planted together with any other appropriate information.

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## **NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **Agenda Item 9**

**12 March 2013**

#### **Cabinet**

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**Subject:** **Water Safety Policy**

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**Purpose:** To seek the approval the Cabinet in respect of a Water Safety Policy

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**Recommendation:** That the Cabinet agrees the Water Safety Policy attached at Appendix 1.

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#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Council is responsible for a number of inland and coastal waters. There are a number of legal obligations in both Common Law and Statute upon the Council in the safe operation of inland and coastal waters for which it is responsible.
- 1.2 The Council's current Water Safety Policy was introduced in 1998. As part of a cyclical review of policies a new policy has been drawn together that recognises a number of legislative changes and the Council's approach to risk management.

#### **2. Current Position**

- 2.1 At its meeting on 3 September 2012, the Environment and Infrastructure Policy Board considered the draft Water Safety Policy for the safe provision and use of inland and coastal waters.
- 2.2 The policy, attached at Appendix 1, sets out the Council's approach to the safe provision and use of inland and coastal waters for which it is responsible.

#### **3. Proposals**

- 3.1 That the Cabinet agrees the Water Safety Policy attached at Appendix 1.

#### **4. Implications**

##### Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications.

##### Human Resource Implications

- 4.2 There are no human resource implications.

##### Legal Implications

- 4.3 There are a number of legal responsibilities and duties upon the Council in the safe operation of inland and coastal waters within its ownership or control.

##### Equality Implications

- 4.4 There are no equality implications.

##### Environmental Implications

- 4.5 There are no equality implications.

##### Implications for Key Priorities

- 4.6 The safe operation of inland and coastal waters provides a positive contributions to a number of key priorities.

#### **5. Consultations**

- 5.1 Consultation has taken place with the Council's Planning, Legal, Health & Safety, Insurance and Risk Management, Estates and Countryside Ranger Services in preparation of this policy. The Environment and Infrastructure Policy Board have considered and noted the content of the proposed as submitted to Cabinet for their consideration and approval.

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 The Water Safety policy sets down the Council's approach to the safe provision and use of inland and coastal waters for which it is responsible.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CH', is positioned above a horizontal line.

**CRAIG HATTON**  
Corporate Director (Development and Environment)

Reference : RM/DW/II

For further information please contact Donald Wilson, Streetscene Manager  
on telephone number 01294 541526

### **Background Papers**

None.



## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Within North Ayrshire there are a number of Public Open Spaces within the ownership of the Council that include areas of open water. Due to the diverse shape and size of these areas of water, their use is varied. The Council recognises the positive contribution well managed water spaces can provide to the area enhancing the environment and through leisure use supporting tourism and healthy living objectives. The types of open water within the responsibility of the Council include:

- Lochs & Lochshores
- Rivers & Riverbanks
- Ponds
- Streams
- SUDS Ponds
- Drainage ditches
- Beaches & Coastlines
- Promenades
- Slipways/Piers

- 1.2 Open water can present significant risks that may vary in response to environmental changes, for example, the desire to swim in cold water on a hot day or the attraction to walk or skate on ice in the winter. It is not practical to deny access to all water nor is it necessary to erect barriers at all locations. The Council in its risk assessment of open water will take all 'reasonable steps' to protect people from danger. This policy has been written in line with guidance provided by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA).

## **2. Statement of Intent**

- 2.1 The Council will provide appropriate arrangements for the management of areas of open water under its control. These measures should ensure that, 'so far as reasonably practicable', all open water facilities and other water based facilities for which the Council is responsible, are maintained in as safe a condition as is practicable for the benefit of the users and the safety of employees.
- 2.2 This policy does not refer to the organisation of activities for individuals under the age of 18, this is managed separately and is provided for under the Activity Centres (Young Persons Safety) Act 1995.
- 2.3 This policy is in respect of areas of inland water and coastal areas that are the responsibility of the Council. It does not consider those within private

ownership. In these cases private owners must make appropriate arrangements to ensure that their legal obligations are adequately discharged.

### **3. Legal Responsibility**

3.1 There are a number of legal obligations in both Common Law and Statute upon the Council in respect of access to and the safe management of inland and coastal water sites for which it is responsible.

3.2 The public enjoys various rights of access over the sea, sea bed and the foreshore and of navigation in inland waters through Common Law and the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code accompanies the 2003 Act and is the key reference source for event organisers.

3.3 The following legislation places duties upon the Council in respect of the safe operation of waters for which it is responsible:-

- Health and Safety at Work Act (HASAW) 1974
- The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981
- Public Health Act 1936
- Occupiers Liability (Scotland) Act 1960
- The Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996
- Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977

3.4 The Council also has a 'duty of care' responsibility through common law. This requires the Council 'to take reasonable care to avoid acts or omissions which can reasonably be foreseen as likely to cause injury'. A certain level of risk is acceptable and it is expected that safety measures will be applied 'as far as is reasonably practicable'. In other words, practicable measures have to be technically feasible, and costs in time, money and effort are reasonable. Similarly users of waterways are expected to share the responsibility for their safe use by not ignoring hazards, abuse facilities or equipment or exercise ill-judgement.

### **4. Inspection**

4.1 Risk assessments will be reviewed on a two-year cycle, in response to works at a site or location or immediately where an accident or incident has occurred. The assessment will identify the conditions at each site and the



appropriate mitigating actions to enable the Council to meet its legislative responsibilities.

- 4.2 A regular inspection programme is in place to ensure that the mitigating actions put in place to manage the level of risk are well maintained and identify any changes to the site that will require a new risk assessment. Inspections will be taken at a frequency commensurate with the risk classification of the site as follows:-

- High Risk – areas identified as high risk or for some other reason recorded as warranting a higher level of inspection will be inspected four times annually in Spring, Summer, Autumn & Winter;
- Medium to Low Risk – areas identified as medium to low risk will be inspected twice annually in Spring & Autumn.

Those sites where signage and or safety equipment and points have been installed will be inspected on a weekly basis to ensure that equipment is in good order.

- 4.3 Action to address any issues identified during the routine site inspection will be prioritised as follows:-

- Priority 1; action to be taken within 2 working days or as soon as practicable – any change in the condition of the site which by its nature constitutes a high risk to users e.g. significant deterioration of the surface adjacent to water, damage to safety equipment
- Priority 2; action to be taken within 5 working days – any change in the condition of the site that by its nature has the potential to increase the risk to users within the immediate future. This includes the theft and/or damage to safety appliances and signs.
- Priority 3; action to be taken with 4 weeks – any change to the condition of the site which by its nature if not put right has the potential to increase the risk to anticipated users e.g. erosion of footways.

## **5. Education & Awareness**

- 5.1 The Council recognises that the provision of literature and pertinent information on water safety to both the public and staff can enable the prevention of accidents and drowning. Appropriate information can heighten people's perceived risk of open water and its surroundings to match that of the real risk. This is particularly important when considering children around open water as often their perceived risk of a hazard is very low. The

development of this information will be continuous, in order to fully engage the safety message to people and will include the following:-

- Provision of water safety information on the Council's website
- Provision of timely information through social media and other media routes in response to seasonal events e.g. hot weather, ice, high tides etc.
- Design and subsequent distribution/display of literature amongst users
- Presentations to school children
- Provision of on-site warning signs and information
- Provision of rescue equipment at key locations

## **6. Risk Assessment (categorisation of sites)**

- 6.1 Unsupervised open water can present a high level of risk due to the nature and use of adjacent walkways. The level of risk at each site will be assessed through the Risk Level Classification matrix attached at Appendix 1. Those sites identified as 'high risk' will require a separate site specific water safety strategy.
- 6.2 The risks identified in this assessment will be mitigated through a range of actions and safety measures including signage, equipment and physical barriers.

## **6.3 Site Signage**

- 6.3.1 Where necessary, three forms of site signage will be used to improve and ensure greater awareness of the potential dangers of water on the Council's public open spaces. These are:

Multi-signs – Signage outlining key dangers and key safety information, for example:

- Location
- Map of the site with lifesaving points and help points identified (where such equipment is installed)
- Do not enter the water
- No swimming
- Action to be taken in an emergency
- Location of nearest telephone
- Space should also be provided for the positioning of temporary notices (e.g. Danger – ice take care!)

Multi-signs will be provided at each key site (category High Risk sites) with positioning of these being determined through the site specific safety strategies. It is important that this signage relates exclusively to safety and that it is kept simple and does not include any other information.

Safety Points – Lifebuoy covers repeating key information from Multi-signs (details of emergency telephone numbers, for example).

Nag Signs – These are smaller signs displayed in key locations, again repeating key information from the multi-signs e.g. Danger No Swimming, Deep Water.

- 6.3.2 Warning signs will be in accordance with the requirements of the Health and Safety Signs and Signals Regulations [amended 2002]. All new signs erected will meet the BS 5499-11:2002 BSI standard.
- 6.3.3 The Council will erect additional temporary signage where appropriate to alert the public to short-term or seasonal hazards e.g. ice.

## **6.4 Rescue Equipment**

- 6.4.1 The provision of site rescue safety equipment will be identified through the Risk Classification process. Site rescue equipment, if required, will comprise of Lifebuoys and Throw lines. Lifebuoys are generally considered suitable for areas having steeper banks and deep water such as adjacent to quay sides or rivers. Throw lines, however, are more suitable where the gradient is shallow and directional suitability is required.
- 6.4.2 Where appropriate, rescue equipment will be combined with safety signage and located into a position known as a safety point. Where a number of safety points are located on one site, each will be identified by a number, recorded on a site plan and monitored. The location of 'safety points' will be determined by the risk assessment process and will likely reflect probable points of access to the water and where there maybe a rescue attempt. A safety point should be visible from any point around the potential risk.
- 6.4.3 Rescue equipment is often subject to vandalism and theft. In those locations where the continued integrity of equipment cannot be maintained consideration will be given to alternative safety methods such as increasing the physical level of edge protection.

## **6.5 Edge Protection**

6.5.1 Natural edge protection is a low cost and effective method to control access to water. In order to be effective it should consist of at least a 1-metre gap of dense and/or hostile vegetation (weed, scrub, nettle and brambles for example) from the water body (lake, stream, river etc) to a designated path used by the public. If it is necessary to carry out any work to edge protection vegetation, this will generally be carried out as part of the winter maintenance and planting programmes with the following exceptions:

- Maintenance to areas required for the safe operation of the onsite sporting concessions, including angling, swimming and sailing;
- Work required at the earliest opportunity for the health and safety of the general public.

6.5.2 Where the requirement for edge protection has been identified but where natural vegetation cannot be grown or where it cannot provide the required level of protection consideration will be given to the erection of suitable structures such as railings, walls etc.

## **7. Ice**

7.1 The Council will erect additional temporary signage where identified through risk assessments to alert the public the hazards associated with ice. This will be supplemented by the release of timely information through the Council's communication channels.

7.2 As a general rule ice will not be broken when it forms, however where safe, consideration may be given to the limited breaking of ice in prolonged cold weather situations for environmental/wildlife reasons

## **8. Pollution**

8.1 Any instances of water pollution (oil/blue green algae for example) should be reported at the earliest opportunity to enable appropriate actions to be implemented. In such cases the Council will ensure that suitable warning signs are displayed around the affected area and that water based recreational activities are appropriately restricted until water conditions improve. When a potential risk to human health, associated with aquatic wildlife is identified, the Council will execute appropriate monitoring and reporting regimes as directed by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency. Any remedial actions dictated by them will be implemented under their direction.

## **9. Employees and Contractors**

- 9.1 All Council employees and appointed contractors working on or in the vicinity of open water sites are required to implement the Council's Health and Safety Policy and to undertake suitable and sufficient risk assessments in relation to activities carried out adjacent to water.
- 9.2 It is neither reasonable nor practicable to provide full-time supervision to areas of open water and is not the most effective reaction to a water hazard. However where employees are present on site, they may take a proactive approach in educating the public and highlighting the common dangers around open water.

## **10. Use of Open Water for Activities**

- 10.1 Where a group or organisation wishes to use an area of water for an approved activity, an application must be made to the Council. This does not apply to normal arrangements of a club or group using the water by lease, license or any other formal agreement.
- 10.2 Applications must be made at least four weeks in advance of the proposed event activity. When large events are being proposed more advance notice would be preferable.
- 10.3 The event organiser will be responsible for organising the event in line with the sites normal operating procedures. Risk assessments will be required for each event and will be checked by the site manager in liaison with the Council's Health and Safety Officer. Copies of all the documents will be made available to all staff involved in managing or working at the site.

## **11. Recording and Reporting of Accidents**

- 11.1 Where a member of the public or staff is involved in a water-based accident or sustains an injury, the incident must be reported and recorded in accordance with Council procedures. Members of the public will be encouraged to report any incidents to the Council.

## Appendix 1

### Risk Level Classification

A progressive programme of Risk Assessments will be undertaken to determine conditions at each site in accordance with are policy.

The following

Severity	Rating	Definition
<b>Near Miss</b>	<b>1</b>	No injury incident, minor property, vehicle or plant damage
<b>Minor</b>	<b>2</b>	A minor injury, such as cuts and bruises which can be dealt with on site by administering first aid
<b>Non –reportable</b>	<b>3</b>	A major injury to person/s requiring more than minor first aid. May require trip to casualty
<b>Reportable</b>	<b>4</b>	Critical injury to person/s e.g. broken limbs, major cuts. An essential need for medical help and possible hospitalisation. More than 3 days required off work.
<b>Specified Major Injury</b>	<b>5</b>	Permanent or life-threatening injury to a person/s e.g. loss of limb.
<b>Fatal Injury</b>	<b>6</b>	Immediate loss of life or lost person/s at sea or in waterway

Likelihood	Rating	Definition
<b>Unlikely</b>	<b>1</b>	Not to be expected
<b>Improbable</b>	<b>2</b>	Unusual/rare – an event that is so unlikely that it should not be considered as possible
<b>Occasional</b>	<b>3</b>	Could happen
<b>Probable</b>	<b>4</b>	Not a surprise – unlikely to occur often but may occur several times during the season under normal weather conditions
<b>Likely</b>	<b>5</b>	To be expected – likely to occur under normal conditions but is possible under extreme weather conditions
<b>Certain</b>	<b>6</b>	Likely to occur under all weather conditions throughout the year

### Inland Water Safety Risk Assessment Proforma

<b>Site Name:</b>		<b>Grid Ref:</b>	E	N
<b>Type of Water Course:</b>				
<b>Description and specific location of Area Assessed:</b>				

<b>1. Physical Assessment</b>			
1.1	Water type		
1.2	Depth		
1.3	Width		
1.4	Banking		
1.5	Gradient		
1.6	Edge Growth		
1.7	Paths		
1.8	Fencing		

<b>1.9 Overall Assessment</b>

<b>1.10 Risk Potential</b>	
Low	
Medium	
High	

2. Environmental Assessment			
2.1 Detail	Distance to Water	Intervening Area	Access Type e.g. remote/limited

2.2 Overall Assessment

2.3 Risk Potential
Low
Medium
High

3. Behavioural Assessment Detail types and frequency of use of the area including identification of vulnerable groups			
3.1 Type of use	Frequency	High/Medium/Low	Vulnerable Groups

3.2 Risk Potential
Low
Medium
High



4. Preventative Measures Existing		
Details of existing preventative measures		
Preventative Measures	Detail	Condition
4.1 Fencing		
4.2 Walkways		
4.3 Edge Treatment		
4.4 Signage		
4.5 Location		
4.6 Ice Management		

5. Preventative Measures Recommended		
Detail	Location/Comment	Date Completed

6. Inspection Schedule Recommended	
High Risk – Quarterly	
Medium to Low Risk – 6 monthly	
Signage/Safety Appliances – weekly	

Assessment Completed By:	Name: Designation: Date:
Checked By:	Name: Designation: Date:

7. Notes

### Coastal Waterways Risk Assessment

<b>Grid Reference:</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>N</b>
------------------------	----------	----------

<b>Completed By:</b>	<b>Designation:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
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<b>Responsible Body</b>	
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<b>General Description of Area Boundaries:</b>
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### Assessment Notes

<b>Beach Name</b>	
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<b>Month</b>	<b>Number of Visitors per Month</b>
<b>April</b>	
<b>May</b>	
<b>June</b>	
<b>July</b>	
<b>August</b>	
<b>September</b>	
<b>October</b>	

### Appendix 3

<b>Any further notes/comments:</b>
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**Beach Plan identifying the following:**

- Local Landmarks
- Hazards
- Area of Concern

**Coastal Water Risk Assessment Proforma**

	<b>Hazards</b>	<b>Severity (S)</b>	<b>Likelihood (L)</b>	<b>S x L</b>	<b>Incidents</b>
<b>E N V I R O N M E N T A L</b>	Rip Currents				
	Underflow				
	Longshore Drift				
	Estuarial Currents				
	Tidal Cut Off				
	High Seas, Heavy Surf Conditions				
	Plunging/Dumping Waves				
	Surging Waves				
	<b>Weather</b>				
	Winds & Chills				
	Sun				
	Poor Visibility				
	Changeable /extreme conditions				
	Cliff Fall/Landslip				
	Sandbars/Sandbanks				
	Unsafe Beach Access				
	<b>Hazardous Substances</b>				
	Fuel Oils				
	Waste				
	Sharps				
	Other				
	Sharps				
<b>E N V I R O N M E N T A L</b>	<b>Water Quality</b>				
	Industrial Plant				
	Sewage Outfall				
	Agricultural Run Off				
	Microbiological				
	Other				
	<b>Beach/Marine Envenomation</b>				
	Bee/Wasp				
	Weever Fish				
	Jelly Fish				
	Sun				

	Hazards	Severity (S)	Likelihood (L)	S x L	Incidents
<b>P H Y S I C A L</b>	<b>Natural Structures</b>				
	Cliffs				
	Large Rocks				
	Promenade				
	<b>Man Made Structures</b>				
	Harbour Walls				
	Piers				
	Jetties				
	Buildings				
	<b>Coastal Defences</b>				
	Sea Walls				
	Wave Breaks				
	Groynes				

	Hazards	Severity (S)	Likelihood (L)	S x L	Incidents
<b>H U M A N</b>	<b>Activity Hazard</b>				
	Swimming				
	Surfing/Body Boarding				
	Sailing				
	<b>Windsurfing</b>				
	Snorkeling				
	Climbing				
	Inflatables				
	Powered Craft				
	Kite Surfing				
	Walking				
	Other				
	<b>Behavioural Hazards</b>				
	Bravado				
	Alcohol				
	Drug Abuse				
	Violent/Threatening Behaviour				
	Other				
	Vulnerable User Group				

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## **NORTH Ayrshire Council**

### **Agenda Item 10**

**12 March 2013**

#### **Cabinet**

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**Subject:** **Welfare Reform**

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**Purpose:** To update the Cabinet on the progress made against the welfare reform action plan.

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**Recommendation:** That the Cabinet notes the progress made against the Welfare Reform action plan as set out at Appendix 1.

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#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 A report was submitted to Cabinet on 23 October 2012 advising of progress on Welfare Reform, this report updates the Cabinet on progress since then. An update on the Action plan is attached at Appendix 1.

#### **2. Current Position**

##### **Under-Occupation in Social Housing**

- 2.1 A key issue which has emerged since the last update relates to supported accommodation.
- 2.2 Housing Associations, voluntary organisations and charities are included in the DWP's definition of "supported exempt accommodation". This means that these bodies are excluded from under-occupation rules, in addition the benefit cap will exclude housing benefit. Council owned property is not included in the DWP definition even though the services offered are of a similar nature and to the same client group.
- 2.3 Under-occupation and the benefit cap therefore apply to council owned property. When Universal Credit is introduced the housing element will be based on 90% of the Local Housing Allowance rate for the property and a maximum management fee of £60 per week will be provided to Councils to cover their costs. It is not uncommon for a homeless household to move between Local Authority temporary accommodation into RSL exempt accommodation as part of their 'homeless journey' and under current proposals they will receive different levels of benefit depending on where they are residing.

2.4 The assessment of the proposed changes shows the following estimated impact on the Council's temporary accommodation income:

- Reduction in income 2013/14 due to under occupation - £260,190 (assumes 100% non-payment of the additional rent required from this client base)\*;
- Reduction in income 2014/15 onwards due to introduction of LHA rates under Universal Credit - £1,641,354 (assumes 50% non-payment rate).

\* Due to the delay in the benefit cap being implemented, it is assumed that this element will not have a significant impact in 2013/14.

2.5 This issue is being raised by COSLA at the highest political level but the current position raises serious doubts about Local Authorities capacity to own and provide temporary accommodation. A strategic review of the Council's service provision is required as it is no longer sustainable in its current form and this will be taken forward by Housing Services.

2.6 The Housing Services Welfare Reform Advice Team is in place. Letters were issued to tenants week beginning 21 January to advise that they were affected by under-occupation. This is being followed up by a personal visit and these started on 5 February. The visiting programme will take around 20 weeks to complete. During the visit the team will gather information to assist with the implementation of Universal Credit. A dedicated telephone number has been set-up for tenants and they can speak to a member of the Welfare Reform Advice Team. Information relating to under-occupation will be given in the Tenancy Matters newsletter, annual rent notifications and leaflets and information will be displayed on televisions at public enquiry areas and libraries.

2.7 A report including recommendations on the impact of welfare reform on applicants on the housing list has been prepared for consideration by the North Ayrshire Housing Register Steering group.

2.8 A tenant satisfaction survey commenced in January 2013 and included questions relating to welfare reform to gauge awareness levels. A final report will be available by the end of March.

### **Scottish Welfare Fund**

2.9 The Scottish Government has issued the final version of the Scottish Welfare Fund application form and national guidance.

- 2.10 Software systems from Northgate, IEG4 and Victoria Forms have been demonstrated and the preferred supplier is Northgate. The Northgate hosted system provides an electronic eligibility checker and integrated application form based on the national qualifying criteria. Northgate is also setting up a public website around May where customers can check their eligibility for a grant and apply on-line direct to the Council. Northgate has won the contract for a Welsh national scheme and will utilise the same software.
- 2.11 The new administration team is in place in the Benefits Service. The software system has been delivered and testing has commenced. The timescale for implementation is challenging and overlaps with annual billing and testing of new benefits software that included under-occupation and council tax reduction changes. The project is on track to meet the deadline of 31 March 2013.
- 2.12 Applications for crisis grants and community care grants will be taken over the telephone by the customer contact centre and a face-to-face customer service delivered by the Benefits Service based at Cunninghame House. Customers who visit the Largs and Saltcoats first stop shops will be routed to the customer contact centre over the telephone where an application form will be completed.
- 2.13 Scotland Excel is developing a framework for the Supply, Delivery and Installation of Domestic Furniture and Furnishings including White Goods, relating to domestic dwellings including temporary accommodation / hostels and other similar types of related dwellings. The Council will use this framework for the delivery of community care grants. However the framework is not expected to be in place until May at the earliest. A contingency plan has been put in place to use the Council's current temporary furnishing contract with the Furnishing Service Limited until the framework is in place.
- 2.14 PayPoint has been identified as the preferred supplier for crisis grants which will be paid by voucher. A customer will take the voucher to one of the 53 local stores that provide the PayPoint service and redeem the voucher for cash or a utility energy top-up. Crisis grants will also be paid by way of travel warrants or payment via BACS and in cash or cheque but these options will only be used in exceptional circumstances.
- 2.15 The performance target set by the Scottish Government from receiving an application to making a decision is 2 working days for a crisis grant and 15 working days for a community care grant.

- 2.16 The customer has a right of appeal and first stage reviews will be carried out by an independent senior officer in the Benefits Service. Stage 2 appeals will be decided by a independent panel made up of senior officers from Finance & Property. The customer then may appeal to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.
- 2.17 Staff have received 2 days training from the Scottish Government on the national guidance, application form and the decision-making process.
- 2.18 The Council is working with East Ayrshire Council and South Ayrshire Council to agree a pan-Ayrshire approach to the prioritisation of an application into a high, medium or low priority, in accordance with national guidance. Prioritisation and the use of discretion are vital to managing the cash limited funds throughout the year.
- 2.19 Agreement has been reached with the Fullarton Parish Church to use the North Ayrshire foodbank as a supplement or alternative to crisis grants. Partnership arrangements are already in place with Social Services children and families to provide food packs. This arrangement has now been extended to the Scottish Welfare Fund team from April to underpin the Scottish Welfare Fund.
- 2.20 The Scottish Government has launched it communication campaign to promote the Scottish Welfare Fund scheme through leaflets and posters. The welfare reform working group has linked into this campaign and updated the material with local contact details and circulated them through Council Offices and local partner organisations.
- 2.21 A cross-service working group with officers from Finance & Property, Social Services and Housing Services has been set-up and will meet monthly to review and evaluate the administration of the scheme and the service provided to customers.

### **Universal Credit (UC)**

- 2.22 The DWP timetable for migrating from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit is still awaited. The DWP has indicated that Scotland will not be affected until early 2014.
- 2.23 The DWP and Local Authority Associations have produced a Universal Credit Local Support Services Framework for the DWP and Councils to develop partnership working in the lead up to the roll out of Universal Credit from October 2013.



- 2.24 The DWP intends to use the learning from the Universal Credit Pathfinder, 12 Local Authority pilots and the 6 payment demonstration sites to provide an updated and comprehensive second version by October 2013, in time to inform the Councils budget planning for 2014-15.
- 2.25 COSLA is calling for a separate Scottish agreement between the Scottish Government and the DWP to be delivered locally through Community Planning Partnership. COSLA is looking for the DWP to provide start-up costs for office space, IT and staff training based on best estimate of demand with a more structured methodology once volumes and costs from the Universal Credit pathfinder are known.
- 2.26 The framework indicates there will be exceptions to the normal direct payment rules and this will be managed and administered centrally by DWP, for example:
- Payment of the housing costs element of a claim to a landlord;
  - The splitting of the personal allowance element of UC between two adult members of a household where there is financial abuse; and
  - More frequent payments of UC to help with budgeting.
- 2.27 The DWP direct payment demonstration project payment figures for December 2012 states that an average of 90% of claimants are now paying their rent direct to their landlord. However, these results should be treated with caution due to the scale of the participation in the pilots and as they only relate to housing benefit and not Universal Credit. In addition findings suggest that a major investment in staff is required to achieve such results.
- 2.28 The UK Government has confirmed that the 1% uprating of benefits for future years will not apply to social rents under Universal Credit.
- 2.29 There has been no further clarification from the Scottish Government on the passporting rules to wider benefits for example free school meals when Universal Credit is introduced.

### **Benefit cap**

- 2.30 Implementation of the benefit cap has been deferred by the DWP from April 2013 until the summer of 2013.

## **Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

- 2.31 Cessation of Council tax benefit and commencement of the council tax relief scheme will not result in any change to the level of council tax paid by those currently in receipt of CT benefit. Council Tax annual billing for 2013-14 including a council tax reduction was completed on the 1 March 2013 and demand notices issued on the 11 March 2013.

## **Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs)**

- 2.32 Funding has now been allocated to Councils to support DHPs. Although the DWP has allocated this across a range of categories; core funding, local housing allowance, size criteria and benefit cap, the DWP recognises that it is for Councils to apply discretion as to which claimants will receive payments. The DWP will monitor the expenditure to ensure it is targeted to those affected by the reforms.
- 2.33 The size criteria components is aimed specifically at 2 groups - foster carers and properties which have been significantly adapted to meet the needs of a disabled person . In North Ayrshire kinship carers on benefit are being included within the foster carer group. The anticipated loss of benefit for this group is £16,500.
- 2.34 The benefit cap has been deferred until the summer of 2013. The last DWP scan showed a benefit reduction of around £121,000.
- 2.35 As a January 2013, £53,542 of the Council's DHP baseline budget of £97,947 was spent mostly on Local Housing Allowance (LHA) reforms. Based on these figures there are sufficient funds to cover LHA reforms in 2013-14.
- 2.36 Total DHP funding will not cover the reduction in housing benefit due to under-occupation for council tenants, temporary accommodation and housing associations, which are in excess of £1m.
- 2.37 DHPs are intended to cover temporal situations, as such they do not offer long term solution to some of the challenges resulting from welfare reform. This together with the anticipated reduction to benefits payable requires clear guidance to support of the Council's DHP policy. This will be available early March.

## **Personal Independence Payment / Passported Benefit**

- 2.38 Money Matters identified Blue Badge applicants on Disability Living Allowance (DLA) as an important group to consult with on the introduction of the Personal Independence Payment and new passporting arrangements.

- 2.39 The consultation has had limited success. Customers have been unwilling to co-operate with Money Matters to discuss the DLA application or assessment process. Some customers have expressed concern that they will lose their DLA or that their Blue Badge application will be revisited. A lack of engagement with the Council's advice service is extremely unusual and highlights the concerns that customers have over welfare reform.
- 2.40 The Scottish Government has not provided any updates of the development of the new passporting arrangements.

### **Staff training and communication**

- 2.41 20 days of staff training arranged over 5 weeks commenced in February 2013 and is scheduled to finish in April 2013.
- 2.42 Three different levels of training will be delivered.
- Half day general awareness
  - Full day detailed overview
  - 2 day course for practitioners
- 2.43 Over 300 Council staff will go through the training programme. Some Members have also attended the general awareness sessions. 18 welfare reform awareness sessions have been delivered by the working group to Social Services teams providing support, care and advice to individuals and families likely to be affected by welfare reform. Training for Housing Services staff on under-occupation rules is complete.
- 2.44 The Welfare Reform Working Group has developed a communication strategy for each of the key reforms. The aim of the strategy is to:
- Raise public awareness of benefit changes
  - Inform staff
  - Inform tenants through a targeted approach
  - Reinforce key welfare reform messages

This includes:

- Website updates (Internet and Navigate).
- Pan-Ayrshire west sound radio adverts in March.
- Leaflets on under-occupation and benefit cap.
- Tenancy Matters articles with the March edition including a leaflet outlining all the reforms.
- Explanatory leaflets with annual rent statements and council tax demands.
- Production of Members quick guide to welfare reform.

- Linking with the Scottish Government publicity campaign for the Scottish Welfare Fund.
- Creation of a Council welfare reform DVD
- Press releases and newspaper articles.
- Posters and information relayed on televisions at public counters and libraries.

2.45 A welfare reform seminar for third sector organisations was held on the 27 February. The aim of the seminar was to raise awareness of welfare reform and to identify areas for continued partnership working to ensure customers receive a holistic service.

### **Action Plan**

2.46 Significant progress has been made in progressing the Welfare Reform Action Plan with a number of actions complete. A revised Action Plan for 2013/14 will be developed and presented with the next Cabinet update on Welfare Reform.

## **3. Proposals**

3.1 The Cabinet is asked to note the progress made against the Welfare Reform Action Plan as set out at Appendix 1.

## **4. Implications**

### **Financial Implications**

4.1 The Council will receive the following funding:

### **Scottish Welfare Fund**

Set-up costs	£70,457
Administration costs 2013/14	£174,880
Administration costs 2014/15	£159,850
Community care grant funding	£705,972
Crisis grant funding	£362,552
Total grant funding	£1,068,524

### **Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

4.1.1 The Scottish Government has agreed to provide £4.156m to fund the set up costs of the 2013/14 Council Tax Reduction scheme for all Scottish Councils. A fixed sum of £102,000 is being provided for IT set-up costs to each of the 32 Councils and this will fully cover the cost of the software changes for the Council. The remaining £892,000 is expected to be distributed to each Council based on caseload. The Council's share of this sum has yet to be confirmed.

- 4.1.2 The Scottish Government has confirmed the initial allocation to Councils of their share of funding, representing 80%. North Ayrshire will receive £0.603m as its share of the national pot for the funding gap arising from the cessation of the council tax benefit scheme and £8.595m of core funding. The remaining 20% will be distributed by the Government when more up to date data is available. In addition to the funding for Scottish Government the Council set aside £0.952m when it set its budget for 2013/14. North Ayrshire's anticipated council tax benefit for 2012/13 is £12.065m.

### **Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)**

- 4.1.3 The DWP has confirmed the DHP funding for 2013-14.

In summary, the total UK funding pot is £155m split as follows:

Base DHP funding	£20m
Local Housing Allowance	£40m
Size Criteria	£30m
Benefit Cap	£65m

- 4.1.4 The Council's share of the total funding is £273,421. When the Council set its budget it set aside Council funding of £394,611 giving a total pot of £668,032.

### **DWP additional funding for welfare reform**

- 4.1.5 The DWP has provided the Council with £37,465 "new burdens" funding to support the costs of implementing welfare reform changes in 2012/13. The funding will be used to meet part of the cost of implementing the welfare reform changes.

Human Resource Implications

- 4.2 None.

Legal Implications

- 4.3 None.

Equality Implications

- 4.4 None.

Environmental Implications

- 4.5 None.

## Implications for Key Priorities

4.6 None.

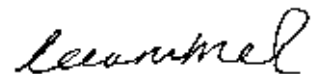
## 5. Consultations

5.1 The welfare reform working group has consulted on the action plan and report.

## 6. Conclusion

6.1 The Welfare Reform Working Group is making significant progress against the Council's action plan and the Council is well placed to manage the impact of the reforms that come into effect from April 2013.

The working group will continue to deliver the remaining actions during 2013-14 and beyond.



LAURA FRIEL  
Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support)

### Reference :

For further information please contact Stephen Humphries, Chief Revenues and Benefits Officer on 01294 324527.

### Background Papers

Welfare Reform Action Plan

DWP circulars S1/2013 and S2/2013

DWP Direct Payment Project - Payment figures December 2012

Scottish Government Scottish Welfare Fund Guidance

## North Ayrshire Council - Welfare reform working group – work plan

Change Number	Date of reform & change description	Impact Assessment	Key Actions Required	Lead Officer	Start date	Completion date	Progress
1	April 2010 to April 2014  <b>Migration of Incapacity Benefit to Employment Support Allowance (ESA)</b>	Increase of the number of unemployed North Ayrshire residents who are actively seeking work. Current figures show 29 claimants for every vacancy in Jobcentre Plus.  Additional resources required to support those with additional barriers to employment.	Review of current Employability activity to assess fit with local labour market needs	Andy Lee	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2012	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2013	Realignment of employability programme with the new Economic Development & regeneration Strategy and the remit and priorities of the newly formed Scottish Employability Forum. Formal relaunch / renewal of Employability Pipeline delayed due to extension of existing programmes until June 2014.
			Work with Work Programme providers to ensure support to this group is provided and enhances existing provision	Andy Lee	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2012		Performance embargo lifted from the Work Programme deliverers allowing locally based discussion to finally take place. More active integration of WP & local service being discussed.
			Examine the availability of additional targeted resources to support this target group	Andy Lee	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2012		Successful work from SLAED to ensure that the effects of welfare Reform are a key element of the new Scottish Employability Forum remit. Additional resource will be allocated nationally to address the employability issues caused by the Welfare Reforms.
			Ensure the pipeline approach adopted by NAC offers a supported pathway into sustainable employment	Andy Lee	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2012		Additional funding sought from Scottish Government to extend delivery of employability programme until June 2014.

## North Ayrshire Council - Welfare reform working group – work plan

Change Number	Date of reform & change description	Impact Assessment	Key Actions Required	Lead Officer	Start date	Completion date	Progress
2	<p><b>The Local Housing Allowance</b> will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>calculated using a 30<sup>th</sup> percentile instead of a median 50<sup>th</sup> percentile</li> <li>capped at the 4 bedroom rate; and</li> <li>£15 excess ends</li> </ul> <p>Claimants will receive up to 9 months transitional protection before the change takes effect. LHA rates for 2012-13 will be frozen and then uprated by the Consumer Price Index.</p>	<p>The LHA rates at the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile are lower than the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile therefore claimants will receive less LHA once their transitional protection ends.</p> <p>The gap between the rent charged and benefit paid will increase and this may increase rent arrears or result in the tenant having to find alternative accommodation or even become homeless.</p> <p>There may be an increase in discretionary housing payment applications to bridge the gap between the rent charged and benefit paid.</p>	Identify the number of claimants who have had their LHA reduced as a result of the change and the amount of benefit that has been lost.	Linda Walker	Jan 2012	31 March 2012	The claimants affected by the change have been identified and the Benefits Service has contacted them regarding the reduction in benefit.
			Monitor the number of discretionary housing payment applications and safeguard applications received from private tenants as a result of the changes.	Linda Walker	1 April 2012	Ongoing	The number of cases are being monitored on a quarterly basis. No increase as a result of welfare reform.
			Work with Housing Services Homelessness Service and monitor the impact the LHA changes are having on the number of private tenants reporting as homeless.	Linda Walker Janeine Barrett	1 April 2012	1 April 2012	No increase due to these reforms.
			Work with landlords through the landlord forum and the landlord working group to encourage a reduction in rent charges to sustain tenancies.	Linda Walker	1 April 2012	June 2012	Welfare Reform update has been provided to the landlord forum.
			Communicate changes to tenants and maintain website	Linda Walker	1 April 2012	April 2012	Website updated with changes. All tenants and landlord written to and advised of changes. Posters in Cunninghame House and all Housing Offices. Updates given at Landlord Forum.



## North Ayrshire Council - Welfare reform working group – work plan

Change Number	Date of reform & change description	Impact Assessment	Key Actions Required	Lead Officer	Start date	Completion date	Progress
3	<b>January 2012</b>  <b>Shared accommodation Rates</b>  A single person aged under 35 living in private rented accommodation will have their Local Housing Allowance calculated using a shared bedroom rate instead of a 1 bedroom rate.  There are a number of exemptions from the shared room rate.	The shared accommodation rate for Local Housing Allowance calculation purposes is £65.00 compared to the one bedroom rate of £80.77, a reduction of £15.77 per week (April 2012 rates).  This change will reduce the benefit of single people under the age of 35 and increase their rent charges. This may result in rent arrears for landlords and could increase levels of homelessness.  The number of safeguard applications may increase resulting in beneficial direct payments made to landlords.	Identify the number of single people aged under 35 affected by this change and the amount of benefit that has been lost.	Linda Walker	Jan 2012	March 2012	The number of people affected and the amount of benefit lost have been identified and claimants written to.
			Notify all single people affected of the change and how it impacts on them and what action they can take. Update website to keep tenants up to date with the change.	Linda Walker	Jan 2012	March 2012	Website updated with changes. All tenants and landlord written to and advised of changes. Monthly updates in place. Posters in Cunninghame House and all Housing Offices. Updates given at Landlord Forum.
			Work with Housing Services and RSL's to identify the homeless hostels in the area and provide a list of under 35 year olds to cross check to records to identify any exemption cases. Consider new work procedures to identify new exemption cases as early as possible.	Linda Walker Janeine Barrett	Jan 2012	Ongoing	List provided to Homeless Service on a monthly basis. Any exempt customers are identified and notified to Benefits Service who automatically apply the exemption to their claim.

## North Ayrshire Council - Welfare reform working group – work plan

Change Number	Date of reform & change description	Impact Assessment	Key Actions Required	Lead Officer	Start date	Completion date	Progress
4	<b>1 April 2013</b>  <b>Benefit cap</b>  The total amount a household can receive in state benefit has been capped at £500 per week for couple and lone parent households and £350 per week for single person households where no children are present. Exclusions do apply.  The cap will be administered by the Council until Universal Credit is introduced in October 2013.	The DWP has notified the Council that there are 187 individuals in North Ayrshire affected by the cap. The DWP will be writing to all households concerned. The DWP will provide the Council with regular scans of households affected by the cap.  Those households to be capped will have their housing benefit reduced down to the cap. This will increase the amount of rent for the household and may increase rent arrears.	Identify from the DWP scans the number of households affected by the cap in the social and private rented sector and the amount of weekly benefit that will be lost. Maintain baseline indicators.	Linda Walker	May 2012	Now Integrated into normal business until October 2013	Regular scans are being received and the impact is being monitored.
			Benefits Service to work with Housing Services on the implications for tenants of temporary accommodation and council housing.	Linda Walker Janeine Barrett	June 2012	August 2012	Currently as above but will be monitored when each scan is received.
		The cap has serious implications for the provision of temporary accommodation by Housing Services.	Benefits to work with RSL's and Private Landlords on the implications of the cap and communicate with the households concerned.		August 2012	Ongoing	Meeting held with Housing Associations re benefit cap
			Agree procedures for notification of future capped households. Maintain the website to provide households with as much information as possible.	Linda Walker	Sept 2012	Dec 2012	Initial discussions have agreed a joint approach.

## North Ayrshire Council - Welfare reform working group – work plan

Change Number	Date of reform & change description	Impact Assessment	Key Actions Required	Lead Officer	Start date	Completion date	Progress
5	<b>Discretionary Housing Payment</b> funding increased.  The Council's allocation for 2012-13 is £95,074. The Council has the discretion to increase this allocation by up to 2.5 times using its own resources provided it is in the interests of the council tax taxpayer. This would increase the funding to £237,685 with £142,611 to be funded by the Council if approved. This is not budgeted for.	The discretionary housing payment provides a temporary solution to claimants to cover part of their housing or council tax costs.  This is a limited fund and will only assist in short term solutions.  Demand may exceed supply once all the welfare reforms have been implemented.  If the Council does not spend close to the £95,074 then it will lose funding in 2013-14 therefore it is important to provide as much support as possible.	Give consideration to how the additional DHP funding will be used and amend the policy.	Stephen Humphries Welfare Reform Working Group	May 2012	Aug 2012	DHP policy produced in response to the Welfare Reform Act 2012
			Council to approve the policy and to consider if it wants to use its discretion to increase the level of funding available for discretionary housing payments by up to 2.5 times.	Stephen Humphries / Linda Walker	Aug 2012	Sept 2012	Report and Policy approved by Cabinet on the 23 October 2012.

## North Ayrshire Council - Welfare reform working group – work plan

Change Number	Date of reform & change description	Impact Assessment	Key Actions Required	Lead Officer	Start date	Completion date	Progress
6	<p><b>April 2011 – April 2014</b></p> <p><b>Non-dependant deductions</b></p> <p>Staged increase in the rate of non dependant deductions used in the calculation of benefit.</p> <p>A non dependant is an adult living in the household of people claiming income related benefits who should contribute to the household costs of the accommodation where they live.</p> <p>Standard deductions apply based on the age and financial circumstances of the non-dependant.</p>	<p>At present 1,825 claimants attract a deduction for combined housing benefit and council tax benefit with 406 for council tax benefit only.</p> <p>938 council tenant HB claims attract a deduction and 481 private rented.</p> <p>The higher the non dependant deduction the less benefit that is awarded.</p> <p>This reform may result in an increase in rent arrears and an increase in homeless presentations due to family tensions.</p> <p>May also result in increased demand on the council's housing waiting list as non dependant choose to leave the household due to increased charges.</p>	Produce baseline information of the number of claims with non-dependant in the household who may be affected by this change.	Marianne McManus/ Linda Walker	April 2012	April 2012	<p>Housing Services provided with a report for customers with deductions 15/03/12.</p> <p>Figures regarding effects of Non dep deductions on NAC properties have been provided.</p> <p>List of cases being monitored by Housing Services and advice and assistance offered to tenants in arrears.</p> <p>Same action as above being carried out in relation to increase in non dep charges wef -1/4/13</p>

## North Ayrshire Council - Welfare reform working group – work plan

Change Number	Date of reform & change description	Impact Assessment	Key Actions Required	Lead Officer	Start date	Completion date	Progress
7	<b>April 2013</b>  <b>Reduction in Housing Benefit due to under occupation for social housing tenants</b>  The amount of weekly Housing Benefit is to be reduced by 14% for working age claimants where there is one extra bedroom or 25% for two or more extra bedrooms.  A size criterion is being introduced into the calculation of housing benefit for working age social housing tenants (aged under 61).  The size criteria will allow one bedroom for: • Each adult	Will also affect <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Separated parents who share the care of their children and who may have been allocated an extra bedroom to reflect this. Benefit rules mean that there must be a designated 'main carer' for children, who receives the extra benefit</li> <li>Couples who use their 'spare' bedroom when recovering from an illness or operation</li> <li>Foster carers because foster children are not counted as part of the household for benefit purposes</li> <li>Parents whose children visit but are not part of the household</li> <li>Disabled people including people living in adapted or specially designed properties.</li> </ul> This reform may result in the movement of council and RSL tenants to smaller	Await further Government details regarding the size criteria. Regulations, expected to be published around May 2012.	Linda Walker Marianne McManus	May 2012	July 2012	Received July 2012.
			Identify household composition for council tenants on benefit and compare to the bedroom criteria.	Linda Walker Marianne McManus	May 2012	June 2012	Potentially 2650 affected tenants. (2129) under occupying by 1 bedroom and 521) under occupying by 2 bedrooms or more )
			Consider if the common housing register can provide information relating to the household composition for all housing associations.	Linda Walker/ Marianne McManus	July 2012	July 2012	No longer required as Northgate provided a solution in Sep 2012.
			Meet all Housing Associations to discuss household composition for their stock, how to capture this data and load it into the benefit system and how to manage the ongoing process.	Linda Walker Marianne McManus	July 2012	Aug 2012	Met HA's on 2 Aug and advised them of the proposed process to be provided by Northgate.
			Discuss with the Benefits Service how new claims for council tenants and changes to household composition will be managed in the future.	Linda Walker Marianne McManus	July 2012	July 2012	Application form updated

## North Ayrshire Council - Welfare reform working group – work plan

	<p>couple</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A single person</li> <li>• Any 2 children under 10</li> <li>• Two children of the same gender 10 to 15</li> <li>• Any other child</li> </ul> <p>A disabled tenant or partner with a non-resident overnight carer will be allowed an extra bedroom.</p>	<p>accommodation in the social or private rented sectors.</p> <p>There will be an increased demand for discretionary housing payments.</p> <p>This reform will mean housing providers will need to collect more rent from more tenants for example a person previously on maximum benefit and this may result in an increase in rent arrears and legal action against tenants and ultimately evictions.</p>	Consider if household composition for council tenants not on benefit needs to be / can be captured on the housing system for future reference.	Linda Walker Marianne McManus	July 2012	July 2012	Application form updated
			Produce baseline data relating to the number of Council and RSL tenants on benefit affected by the change and estimate how much benefit may be lost due to extra bedrooms.	Linda Walker Marianne McManus	July 2012	On-going review of cases	Maximum Rent at Risk to NAC in 2013/14 is £1.4m. DWP predict 35% of tenants will fall into arrears which could result in additional arrears of £446,000 in 2013/14.
			Use the baseline data to consider the potential movement of households from social housing to private rented accommodation and work with landlords to minimise impact.	Marianne McManus Linda Walker RSLs	August 2012	Sept 2012	The baseline data has been compiled discussions held with landlords about the availability of accommodation.
			Review the Discretionary Housing Payment Policy in line with under occupation findings. DHP ring fenced for disabled people and foster carers and obtain executive approval.	Marianne McManus Linda Walker Stephen Humphries	Sept 2012	Oct 2012	Report and Policy approved by Cabinet on the 23 October 2012.
			Review impact on Arrears Policy	Marianne McManus Linda Walker	Mar 13	Jun 13	Options in relation to arrears recovery under review. Report to Cabinet March 2013
			Review impact on Lodger Policy	Marianne McManus	Nov 2012	Mar 13	Review under way by Estate Management Working Group

# **North Ayrshire Council - Welfare reform working group – work plan**

			Review impact on Allocation Policy	Carol Nelson	Dec 2012	Mar 13	A Report including recommendations has been completed and is to be considered by NAHR Steering Group
			Review impact of changes on Housing Business Plan	Marianne McManus/Alex Adrain & Business Planning Working Group	July 2012	Mar 13	Report and presentation to Business Plan Implementation Group on 26 <sup>th</sup> February 2013.

## North Ayrshire Council - Welfare reform working group – work plan

Change Number	Date of reform & change description	Impact Assessment	Key Actions Required	Lead Officer	Start date	Completion date	Progress
8	<b>April 2013</b>						
	<b>Social Fund</b>						
	Payment of Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans has been devolved from the DWP to the Scottish Government.	Demand for a grant may exceed funding and there may be an increase in appeals for payments.  The Council's resource may need to increase to administer a grant scheme.	Compile baseline details of the number of applications made, accepted, rejected and appealed for community care grants and crisis loans in the North Ayrshire area.	Stephen Humphries	May 2012	June 2012	NAC caseload estimated at 7,000 crisis payments and 2,700 community care grants with expenditure of around £948K.
	The Scottish Government is responsible for determining and funding the replacement scheme.	Assessment of the Service design requirements will be required in relation to new responsibilities and activities	Contact Social Services and Housing Services to identify what the current level of interaction is with people who receive community care grants and crisis loans and to develop corporately how a new scheme may be delivered.	Stephen Humphries	June 2012	December 2012	Meetings held with Housing and Social Services to discuss service delivery and these have been built into the customer journey
	Councils' will administer the replacement scheme and funding is expected to be £24m for Scotland.	Decisions required by the Council on the administration of community care grants and crisis loans.	Assess the resource implications and options for service delivery.	Stephen Humphries	TBC	Feb 2013	New benefits structure in place for April 2013
		A new software system may be required to administer community care grants and crisis loans.	Assess and make proposals on service design options for a local Social Fund scheme that meets the needs of the vulnerable claimants and obtain Cabinet approval.	Stephen Humphries	June 2012	Feb 2013	Northgate system purchased, PayPoint to deliver vouchers for crisis payments and Furnishing Services Ltd to provide furniture and white goods for community care grants.
			Implement local Social Fund scheme	Stephen Humphries	1 April 2013		A sub working group from the benefits service is now in place and working on setting the system up. Group on track to achieve this.



## North Ayrshire Council - Welfare reform working group – work plan

Change Number	Date of reform & change description	Impact Assessment	Key Actions Required	Lead Officer	Start date	Completion date	Progress
9	<b>April 2013</b>						December 2012
	<b>Introduction of Personal independence payment (PIP) – replacement for disability living allowance</b>	<p>New claimants aged 16 to 65 will claim PIP under the new rules – many will be unaware of rules and claims process.</p> <p>Expectation that fewer awards / lower awards will be made. 20% reduction in spending anticipated and impact on other “trigger” benefits. May lead to increase in appeals</p>	Awareness raising and information for appropriate local authority staff and partners – Health, advice agencies, frontline disability services, etc.	Isobel Kelly	Sept 2012 if regs available	April 2013	<p>Draft legislation issued in relation to PIP. Includes:- PIP regulations, Assessment Criteria and Transitional Arrangements.</p> <p>This allows effective analysis/ study of the new rules and regulations.</p>
	<b>April 2013 to 2016</b> Migration of existing claims.	New qualifying period and points based assessment may delay award or reduce chance of success.	Provide information, advice and support including appeals to vulnerable / all existing claimants' on migration process, on line claim process and new rules and impact on trigger benefits.	Isobel Kelly	Sept 2012	March 2013	Action on track
	<b>October 2013 –</b> New claims for PIP	This will impact on 16 to 24 year olds with special circumstances and changing educational / training arrangements for 16+ and those with special needs.	Research general rules of entitlement and the assessment / scoring framework and provide training for advice staff.	Isobel Kelly	Sept 2012	Ongoing	This will commence in Q4 of 2012/13 and other actions will follow on from this.
			Raise general awareness by targeting – stroke unit, Social Services care assessors / managers, Macmillan services, and health colleagues.	Isobel Kelly	Sept 2012		This will commence in Q4 of 2012/13 and other actions will follow on from this.
	<b>2016</b> Move from DLA to PIP	It can be difficult for young people and families to access information about transition and how to challenge assessment.	Engage with Education / Health and Social Services staff who support young people with disability.	Isobel Kelly Laura Cook	April 2015	March 2016	

**North Ayrshire Council - Welfare reform working group – work plan**

			Ensure early information about transition and predictability of future entitlement, including other benefits which are related to disability entitlement.	Isobel Kelly	April 2015	March 2016	This will commence in Q4 of 2012/13 and other actions will follow on from this.
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## North Ayrshire Council - Welfare reform working group – work plan

Change Number	Date of reform & change description	Impact Assessment	Key Actions Required	Lead Officer	Start date	Completion date	Progress
10	<b>April 2013</b>  <b>Single Fraud Investigation Service</b>  The DWP is setting up a UK single fraud investigation service (SFIS). This will combine the fraud activity currently carried out by the DWP, Local Authorities and HMRC.  The start date of the SFIS is 1 April 2013 and LA investigation staff will remain employed by the Council and operate under SFIS powers until the situation is reviewed in 2015.	The creation of a single fraud investigation service (SFIS) will harmonise the investigation of benefit fraud under the one organisation.  The SFIS will change the responsibilities and the powers of the Council's benefit investigation team from 1 April 2013.	Keep the benefits investigation team fully informed of any changes.	Stephen Humphries	March 2012	April 2015	Jan 2013 - Staff have been kept fully up to date on any developments. SFIS to be piloted but will not impact on the Council during 2013-14.
			Revise the policies and procedures of the benefits investigation team once the SFIS powers and access to software systems are known.	Stephen Humphries	Once DWP provide regs and guidance	April 2013	Feb 2013 - No feedback from the DWP re the new SFIS powers
		The amount of DWP funding to be provided to the Council to operate under SFIS powers is unknown.	Assess the impact the funding provided by the DWP for operating the SFIS will have on the current level of resource involved in benefit investigations.	Stephen Humphries	Once DWP confirm the funding	April 2013	Feb 2013- no details of SFIS funding received yet.
		The future of the Council's fraud investigation service is unknown and this will impact on staff resources.	Arrange for the training of the benefits investigation staff on SFIS powers with the DWP.	Stephen Humphries	April 2012	April 2013	Staff have registered for DWP courses.

## North Ayrshire Council - Welfare reform working group – work plan

Change Number	Date of reform & change description	Impact Assessment	Key Actions Required	Lead Officer	Start date	Completion date	Progress
11	<b>October 2013 to April 2017</b>  <b>Universal Credit</b>  Housing Benefit will be abolished from around October 2013. New claims and changes in circumstance will migrate to Universal Credit.  Universal Credit will combine Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance, Employment Support Allowance and Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit for working age claimants.  Universal Credit will include a housing element to cover rent charges and it will be paid direct to the claimant.  Pension Credit will also include a housing element.	The Council has an important role to play during the migration period to Universal Credit by shifting claimants to on-line claims. The level of funding for this is currently unknown.	Review potential impact of Housing Revenue Account Business Plan:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Meeting SHQS</li><li>Rent Restructure</li></ul> Council House Building	Marianne McManus/ Business Plan Working group	Oct 2012	April 2017	5613 tenants on full HB and 2500 on partial. £25.2 million of rent income is from HB paid direct to the Council  Cabinet of 30 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2013 approved deferral of rent structure implementation until full impact of welfare reform known Report and presentation on implications of welfare reform for HRA Business Plan to go to Business Plan Implementation Group on 26 <sup>th</sup> February
		Direct payment of Universal Credit will increase rent arrears.	Give consideration to the resources, organisational structure and access points required to underpin the delivery of the Universal Credit migration role and the take-up of electronic claims for example libraries. Including a review of resource requirements needed to reflect growth in tenants receiving Universal Credit.	Stephen Humphries	April 2013	October 2013	Universal Credit Regulation now in place.  Demonstration sites and pilots set up across the UK to test Universal Credit these will inform the service moving forward.
		The migration of benefit claims will impact on the staffing resources required to administer benefit and the financial funding received by the Council.	Introduce a new organisational structure into Benefits to meet the requirements of the new service.	Stephen Humphries	April 2013	April 2013	New Benefits Service structure approved and will be in place for April 2013.
			Benefit Service to manage the migration of Housing Benefit claims to the DWP from October 2013 onwards.	Stephen Humphries	August 2013	April 2017	DWP migration programme unknown, not expected to affect Scottish Councils until 2014.

## North Ayrshire Council - Welfare reform working group – work plan

Change Number	Date of reform & change description	Impact Assessment	Key Actions Required	Lead Officer	Start date	Completion date	Progress
12	<p><b>April 2013 and October 2013</b></p> <p><b>Passported Benefit</b></p> <p>The introduction of Personal Independence Payment from 1 April 2013 and Universal Credit from October 2013 will change the current rules relating to passported benefit.</p>	<p>Changes to the rules on passported benefit will impact on customers in receipt of free school meals, clothing grants, blue badges and education maintenance allowance.</p> <p>The Council awarded 6,427 footwear and clothing grants and 4,689 free school meals in 2011-12 and paid out 667 education maintenance allowances from 811 applications.</p>	<p>Consider with Education, Social Services and the Registration Service what new procedures and application forms need to be introduced to verify an application for a free school meal, clothing grant, blue badge and education maintenance allowance under Universal Credit.</p>	Linda Walker	Once rules have been agreed .	31 March 2013	<p>The working group is responded to the Scottish Government consultation on passported benefit – on the 28 September 2012.</p> <p>Feb 2013 - No further information received from the Scottish Government.</p>

## North Ayrshire Council - Welfare reform working group – work plan

Change Number	Date of reform & change description	Impact Assessment	Key Actions Required	Lead Officer	Start date	Completion date	Progress
13	<b>April 2013</b>  <b>Localised Benefit Scheme</b>  The Council Tax Benefit scheme will be abolished from 1 April 2013. It is to be replaced by a localised scheme administered by local authorities.  For 2013-14 the Scottish Government (£23m) and Local Authorities (£17m) will fund the £40m funding gap. This means that no one will be worse off at 1 April 2013.	The DWP has confirmed that funding for localised benefit schemes will be reduced by 10%. This equates to around £1.2m (2011-12) for the Council and £40m across Scotland.  The localised schemes in England / Wales protect pensioners and vulnerable groups. It is not known if the Scottish scheme will offer the same level of protection. If it does then the benefit reduction will affect working age people.  Any change to current levels of council tax benefit support may increase the amount of debt to be collected and may affect council tax collection levels.	Continue to provide data and comments to officer working groups on the service design options for a replacement Council Tax Benefit scheme.	Stephen Humphries	As required	March 2014	Feb 2013 2013-14 scheme implemented for annual billing. Work will continue on the long-terms scheme from 2014/15 onwards
			Implement the interim localised benefit scheme for 2013-14 including the design of application forms and communication strategy for claimants.	Stephen Humphries	Oct 2012	April 2013	Feb 2013 Regulations received, software changes delivered and annual billing on track.
			Review the benefits organisational structure to deliver the long-term localised benefit scheme.	Stephen Humphries	Jan 2014	April 2013	New Benefits Service structure approved and will be in place for April 2013.

## **North Ayrshire Council - Welfare reform working group – work plan**

### **Overarching Welfare Reform issues**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Action required</b>	<b>Lead officer</b>	<b>Start date</b>	<b>Completion date</b>	<b>Progress to date</b>	<b>Other comments</b>
Communication Strategy	Welfare Reform to be communicated to all Council staff and the general public and partners to raise awareness of all welfare reforms.	Welfare Reform Working Group	June 2012	Jan 2013	Feb 2013 Communication Strategy in place	
Training Strategy	All Council staff affected by the reforms to be trained to ensure that the general public receive the correct advice, guidance and support. Benefits staff to develop new skills to sustain future employment.	Welfare Reform Working Group	June 2012	April 2013	A Training Plan is in place.  Training provider appointed and training commenced Feb 13	
Consultation papers	Respond to all consultation papers regarding Welfare Reform	Welfare Reform Working Group	As required		Social Fund Single Fraud Investigation Service - Aug 2012  DHP Passported Benefit - Sept 2012	
Information Technology development	Consult with software suppliers on system developments to	Stephen Humphries – Northgate Welfare Reform Working Group – other service systems	As required		Northgate Scottish Welfare Fund Software purchased Jan 2013.  Northgate council tax	Council represented at Northgate Scottish User Group meeting

### **North Ayrshire Council - Welfare reform working group – work plan**

	ensure all reforms are implemented.				reduction software changes implemented Jan 2013	
Financial Inclusion & Income maximisation	Provide general budgeting and money advice to claimants and encourage direct payments of rent Need for specialist advice to support tenants with opening bank accounts and increased liaison with credit unions	Isobel Kelly Laura Cook Stephen Humphries Marianne McManus	August 2012	October 2013	Feb 2013 - Proposals from 1 <sup>st</sup> Alliance Credit Union and also from Grant Central Savings have been received in terms of the services they can offer the Council and customers. The working group will consider these proposals at its March meeting.	

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Action required</b>	<b>Lead officer</b>	<b>Start date</b>	<b>Completion date</b>	<b>Progress to date</b>	<b>Other comments</b>
Council's Charging Policy	Review of the Council's charging policy as a result of the Welfare Reforms	Isobel Kelly	Dec 2012			



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## **NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **Agenda Item 11**

**12 March 2013**

#### **Cabinet**

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**Subject:** **Bridgegate Streetscape Enhancement Project -  
Procurement of Street Art**

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**Purpose:** To advise Cabinet of the actions taken to award a contract for street art at Bridgegate.

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**Recommendation:** That the Cabinet notes the actions taken to award a contract to m-tec to supply street art for the Bridgegate Streetscape Enhancement Project.

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#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Part of the overall Bridgegate Enhancement Streetscape Project was to develop a Bridgegate Art Strategy and to subsequently procure a main sculpture and supporting pieces.

#### **2. Current Position**

- 2.1 The Council's partner in the project, Irvine Bay Regeneration Company, appointed a consultant, WAVE, to assist with the design of the artwork. Fluxwork were also appointed to assist with the technical specification of the artwork, due to their expertise in the specialist market of public street art.
- 2.2 Only three companies were identified as having the potential to deliver the street art, however two of the companies could not submit samples. Only one of the companies, m-tec, was able to demonstrate in the sample provided they had the skills and specialist knowledge to deliver the street art required at Bridgegate. There is provision within the Standing Orders Relating to Contracts para 4.1.10 to dispense with competition 'where subject to Council or Cabinet approval any contract where the appropriate Director is satisfied that the requirement is not readily obtained from more than one supplier and it can be demonstrated that no equivalent is available.'

- 2.3 Due to the extreme urgency of this requirement approval was given to award this contract to m-tec. The urgent reasons are as follows:
- Failure to install the art work would affect the surfacing element of the Bridgegate streetscape project. It would be a risk to complete the surfacing and then deliver the art work as delivery of the art work could damage the new surfacing due to its heavy weight.
  - A delay to completing the surfacing would result in temporary protection having to be laid.
  - The works contractor has a programme of work including tasks associated with the art work. Any delay would disrupt the programme and result in additional costs if it could not be completed when forecast.
  - Steel price fluctuation may result in a significant cost increase if the offer is not accepted on time.
  - The art work is part of the planning application and the completion cannot be signed off until the art work is in place.
- 2.4 There is provision to accept tenders in an urgent situation in accordance with clause 18.7 of the Standing Orders Relating to Contracts which states 'In exceptional circumstances, where for reasons of urgency it is not possible to submit a report to Cabinet, the relevant Chief Officer shall submit a report to the Chief Executive, who, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder shall be empowered to authorise acceptance of the tender, subject to a report being submitted to Cabinet at the first available opportunity.'
- 2.5 The Council's Team Manager (Corporate Procurement) confirmed that he was satisfied that the use of this clause is appropriate in this instance.
- 2.6 Following consideration of this issue, the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) and the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the portfolio holder for Finance and Corporate Support agreed that the contract be awarded to m-tec to supply the street art work for the Bridgegate Streetscape Enhancement Project.
- 2.7 Measures are in place to ensure there is better planning to prevent this occurring again. The Corporate Procurement Team will be involved at an early stage in all future project developments.

### **3. Proposals**

- 3.1 The Cabinet is invited to note the actions taken to award the contract for street art work to m-tec.

### **4. Implications**

#### Financial Implications

- 4.1 The cost of the artwork is £127,165 (exclusive of VAT) and has been provided within the overall Bridgegate Streetscape Enhancement Project. Irvine Bay Regeneration Company has made a contribution towards the cost of this.

#### Human Resource Implications

- 4.2 There are no implications.

#### Legal Implications

- 4.3 The value of the contract is below the EU procurement threshold.
- 4.4 Clause 18.7 of the of the Standing Orders Relating to Contracts states 'In exceptional circumstances, where for reasons of urgency it is not possible to submit a report to Cabinet, the relevant Chief Officer shall submit a report to the Chief Executive, who, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder shall be empowered to authorise acceptance of the tender, subject to a report being submitted to Cabinet at the first available opportunity.'

#### Equality Implications

- 4.5 There are no implications.

#### Environmental Implications

- 4.6 There are no implications.

#### Implications for Key Priorities

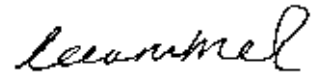
- 4.7 This contributes to Single Outcome Agreement Key Priority 1c, North Ayrshire is a more attractive place to do business.

## **5. Consultations**

- 5.1 The Council's Team Manager (Corporate Procurement) was consulted and confirmed that he was satisfied that the use of clause 18.7 of the Standing Orders Relating to Contracts is appropriate in this instance.
- 5.2 The Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support), the Chief Executive, the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder (Finance and Corporate Support) were consulted and agreed to utilise clause 18.7 of the Standing Orders Relating to Contracts.

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 Failure to award the contract on time would have resulted in additional costs, a delay to the Bridgegate streetscape enhancement programme, potential damage to surfaces and a delay in the planning application.
- 6.2 In order to mitigate against this clause 18.7 of the Standing Orders Relating to Contract was utilised.



LAURA FRIEL  
Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support)

### **Reference :**

For further information please contact Thomas Reaney, Team Manager (Corporate Procurement) on telephone number 01294 324097

### **Background Papers**

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## **NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **Agenda Item 12**

**12 March 2013**

#### **Cabinet**

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**Subject:** **ICT Infrastructure Strategic Review - Managed WAN Services**

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**Purpose:** To advise the Cabinet of the results of the tender and present a recommendation for award of contract.

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**Recommendation:** That the Cabinet agrees to approve the contract award to Capita Business Services Ltd., subject to finalisation of contract and agreement on work schedules.

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#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. On 19 June 2012, the Cabinet gave approval for the ICT Infrastructure Review to progress to the tender phase. One requirement identified by the Review was the procurement of Managed Wide Area Network (WAN) Services.
- 1.2. In order to comply with the Council's Standing Orders and Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2012 (SSI 2012/88) (as amended), a formal tendering exercise was undertaken. As an existing Government Procurement Service framework (RM860) for Managed WAN Services was identified, which is compliant with these regulations, a mini-competition utilising this framework was carried out.
- 1.3. The contract term is for 5 Years commencing April 2013, plus the option to extend for 24 months.

#### **2. Current Position**

- 2.1 A mini-competition was held for design, supply, implementation and support of a fully managed WAN service for North Ayrshire Council. Three bids were received in response to the requirement. These were analysed, further clarification obtained where required and scores determined against previously published evaluation criteria and weightings.

2.2 A tender outcome report and award recommendation is provided in Appendix 1

2.3 Detailed in the table below is the budget and tender costs.

	Existing Cost (£)	Estimate to Cabinet June 2012 (£)	Available Budget (£)	Capita tender costs (£)
Revenue cost (annual)	583,448	489,316	583,448	464,933
Total revenue cost (5 years)		2,446,580	2,917,240	2,324,665
Capital cost (one-off)	nil	668,300	668,300	473,378
Capital cost (excess construction charges)	nil	nil	nil	288,200
Total capital cost (5 years)		668,300	668,300	761,578
Total cost	2,917,240	3,114,880	3,585,540	3,086,243

2.4 During the tender process a number of issues arose:

2.4.1 The Council's building rationalisation programme has highlighted some buildings that may be disposed of over the next few years and the solution proposed needs to take cognisance of this.

2.4.2 All tenders provided an estimate for Excess Construction Charges (ECC) which are passed on by third party providers such as BT Openreach.

2.4.3 The existing revenue cost provided to Cabinet in June 2012 has increased from £569,995 to £583,448. This is due in the main to an increase in circuit rental charges.

### **3. Proposals**

- 3.1 IT Services and Corporate Procurement will discuss with Capita Business Services Ltd., the most effective solution that can be delivered within the budgetary constraints, prioritising key sites with existing bandwidth issues in order to provide the optimum balance of performance and cost and will not exceed the existing budget.
- 3.2 The Cabinet is invited to approve the contract award to Capita Business Services Ltd., subject to finalisation of contract and agreement on work schedules.

### **4. Implications**

#### Financial Implications

- 4.1 The proposed tender will deliver a recurring revenue saving of £118,515.
- 4.2 Costs include estimates for Excess Construction Charges (ECC) which are passed on by third party providers, such as BT Openreach. These costs will be mitigated to ensure that the full solution does not exceed the existing budget.

#### Human Resource Implications

- 4.3 None

#### Legal Implications

- 4.4 Corporate Procurement and Democratic and Administration Services have been involved in the tender process

#### Equality Implications

- 4.5 None

#### Environmental Implications

- 4.6 None

#### Implications for Key Priorities

- 4.7 The implementation of a new infrastructure will contribute to the Council's Single Outcome Agreement and, in particular, will assist in achieving SOA outcome 15b - Public Services are more effective and efficient.

## Community Benefit Implications

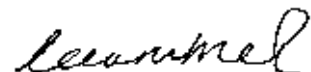
- 4.8 The upgrade of connectivity to libraries and schools will ensure faster access to the internet and other services for pupils, teaching staff and members of the public. The recommended service provider has proposed to use local service partners and will endeavour to use the developments required to meet the service levels of the North Ayrshire Council WAN to deliver high quality bandwidth services to wider community organisations.

## 5. Consultations

- 5.1 Extensive consultation has been carried out as part of the strategic review process and reported in the Cabinet Paper (Item 22) of 19 June 2012.

## 6. Conclusion

- 6.1 It is the recommendation of the evaluation panel that the five year contract should be awarded to Capita Business Services Ltd. The award value will be £3,086,243. Award will be subject to finalisation of contract and agreement on work schedules. This cost includes estimates for Excess Construction Charges (ECC) which are passed on by third party providers for upgrades to their fibre/infrastructure to meet North Ayrshire Council service levels and will be determined during further consultation. The current budget, including the one-off cost estimate reported to Cabinet in June 2012, amounts to £3,585,540.



LAURA FRIEL

Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support)

Reference : NAC\IT\2012-10-01

For further information please contact Maurice McTeague, Category Manager / Team Leader on telephone number 01294 324015

## Background Papers

Tender documentation.





Tender No NAC\IT\2012-10-01  
For the procurement of  
Managed WAN Services – mini-competition  
against Government Procurement Service (GPS)  
Framework (RM860) using the GPS RFX System

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For the procurement of  
Managed WAN Services

## **1 Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to summarise the tender process and present a recommendation for contract award. The recommendation is based on the results of the tender evaluation carried out on the responses to the Managed WAN Services (RM860) RFP mini-competition. The report will provide assurance that the tender evaluation has been undertaken in accordance with EU Procurement Directives, Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2012 (SSI 2012/88) (as amended) and the Councils Standing Orders Relating to Contracts and Contract Procedure Rules for North Ayrshire Council.

## **2 Introduction**

- 2.1 This report has been compiled on behalf of the Tender Evaluation Team following the completion of the evaluation of responses to the Request for Proposals for the provision of Managed WAN Services.

## **3 Background**

- 3.1 North Ayrshire Council required to put in place a contract for Managed WAN Services as part of the overall requirement to develop the IT infrastructure agreed at Cabinet meeting of 19 June 2012.
- 3.2 In order to comply with the Council's Standing Orders and Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2012 (SSI 2012/88) (as amended) a formal tendering exercise was undertaken. As an existing Government Procurement Service framework (RM860) for these services was identified, which is compliant with the above regulations, it was agreed this would be suitable for this requirement.
- 3.3 The Contract term is for 5 Years commencing 1 April 2013 plus the option to extend for 24 Months.
- 3.4 The estimated total value of the overall Contract prior to tender (including any possible extensions) is £3,086,243 including ECC with a capital cost of £761,578 and annual revenue (recurrent) costs by North Ayrshire Council of £464,933.

## **4 Tender Notice, Interest and Returns**

- 4.1 An existing Government Procurement Service framework (RM860) for these services was available and identified as suitable, therefore the contract was advertised using a mini-competition on the Government Procurement Service RFX system on 14 September 2012 with a return date and time of 12:00 on 29 October 2012.
- 4.2 The request for proposals was issued to all service providers on the framework and attracted 9 (nine) expressions of interest from the range of potential providers available on this framework of which 3 (three) submitted offers.

## 5 Evaluation Process

- 5.1 The evaluation of such Tenders was in two stages. Stage one assessed the responses to the Minimum Criteria. If, during stage one, it was apparent that a Tenderer had submitted a fundamentally non-compliant Tender in respect of any of the Invitation To Tenders requirements, then the Council could choose to reject that Tender. Clarification could be sought from Tenderers at this stage, in order to determine whether their Tender was complete and compliant.
- 5.2 Following completion of stage one, Tenderers meeting the minimum criteria progressed to stage two of the evaluation. Stage two of the evaluation was carried out by a Tender Evaluation Panel consisting of appropriately experienced Council Officers and each Tenderer's response was assessed against the following published criteria:

Price + Commercial Proposal	60%
Quality	40%

Quality was evaluated using the following sub-criteria/sub-weightings:

Overview of Requirement	0%
Initial Requirement	10%
Framework Requirement	5%
Small Office/Home Office Connections	3%
Service Management	10%
Implementation	5%
Environmental Requirements	2%
Local Benefits	2%
Reference Sites	3%

- 5.3 The assessment of the criteria took place on 14 November 2012 at Cunninghame House. The Tender Evaluation Panel consisted of representatives from the customer department and technical support from Farrpoint Ltd who assisted with the specification of requirements.
- 5.4 A number of post-tender clarifications were requested from the companies and all companies presented responses to these at further clarification meetings.

## 6 Evaluation Results

### 6.1 Price 50% + Commercial Proposal 10%

Contractors were asked to submit prices against a set of requirements. Their commercial proposals were also subject to evaluation which gave the following results and scores:

Company	Price Tendered	Ranking	Score as % of overall marks
Capita Business Services Ltd	£3,086,243	2	55.82
MDNX Enterprise Services Ltd	£2,861,730	1	60
British Telecommunications PLC	£3,661,101	3	46.53

## 6.2 Quality 40%

The Evaluation of the Technical Aspects of the tender responses was carried out by the Tender Evaluation Panel, a summary of which is as follows:

### Capita Business Services Ltd

The evaluation panel felt the response was well written and were confident that the Tenderer would be able to fully meet North Ayrshire Council's requirements and expectations.

### MDNX Enterprise Services Ltd

The evaluation panel felt the response was generally well written but concerns were identified regarding the proposed solution. The panel identified errors with the research which the provider had carried out on the suitability of some of the proposed solutions and particularly the capability of third party provider infrastructure to deliver these solutions. The company was given a number of opportunities to address these concerns and responded positively and promptly to requests for clarification. Revised proposals confirmed these concerns and constituted significant redesign from the original submission. This indicated a degree of innovation and the ability to adapt, however concerns remained. The panel concluded that the Tenderer may be able to satisfy North Ayrshire Council's requirements and expectations but with less certainty and higher risk.

### British Telecommunications PLC

The panel felt the response was not well written and that there were a number of major concerns particularly with the lack of research to develop an innovative and cost effective solution to the requirement (leading to considerable uncertainty on costs) and there was a lack of resilience of the proposed solution.

The summary of the quality element is shown in the table below:

Company	Technical Score	Ranking	Score as % of overall marks
Capita Business Services Ltd	36.57	1	40
MDNX Enterprise Services Ltd	32.05	2	35.05
British Telecommunications PLC	16.13	3	17.64

## 7 Overall Score

7.1 Following agreement of an overall score for each Tenderer and taking into consideration all qualitative and commercial elements of the responses, a high level summary sheet was completed as shown below:

Company	Price	Pricing Score	Quality Score	Total Score	Total Ranking
Capita Business Services Ltd	£3,086,243	55.82	40	95.82	1
MDNX Enterprise Services Ltd	£2,861,730	60	35.05	95.05	2
British Telecommunications PLC	£3,661,101	46.53	17.64	64.17	3

## 8 Recommendation

- 8.1 It is recommended that the contract should be awarded to Capita Business Services Ltd for the sum of £3,086,243 subject to finalisation of contract and agreement on work schedules. This cost includes Excess Construction Charges (ECC) which are passed on by third party providers for upgrades to their fibre/infrastructure to meet NAC service levels.
- 8.2 Subject to approval, Letters of Intent will be issued to successful and unsuccessful Tenderers acknowledging the Standstill Rules.
- 8.3 Both successful and unsuccessful Tenderers will be provided with the opportunity to receive a full debrief in accordance with the appropriate legislation and guidance.
- 8.4 Upon the conclusion of the Standstill Period, where no formal legal challenge has been raised, IT Services and Corporate Procurement will conclude remaining negotiations on contract, scheduling and timetable and issue Letter of Acceptance to the successful company.

Prior to conclusion of the award process IT Services and Corporate Procurement will hold discussions with Capita to agree the best balance of speed, technology and cost for each of the sites in order to obtain a final solution and costs (including ECC estimates).

## 9 Authority to Approve

- 9.1 In line with Standing Orders Relating to Contracts and Contract Procedure Rules for North Ayrshire Council, the Tender Evaluation Panel seeks to obtain authority from Cabinet to accept the Tender(s) and award a contract to the Tenderer(s) identified in section 8.1.
- 9.2 If authority to accept is given by committee, please attach a copy of the minutes giving approval.

Representative of Committee:

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **Agenda Item 13**

**12 March 2013**

#### **Cabinet**

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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Environment &amp; Infrastructure Policy Board</b>
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<b>Purpose:</b>	To submit the Minutes of the Meeting of the Environment and Infrastructure Policy Board held on 18 February 2013
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<b>Recommendation:</b>	That the Cabinet notes the Minutes attached at Appendix 1.
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#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Environment and Infrastructure Policy Board is one of six Policy Boards formed by the Council following the elections in May 2012.

#### **2. Current Position**

- 2.1 A meeting of the Environment and Infrastructure Policy Board was held on 18 February 2013. At that time, the Board considered reports in respect of The Abandoned Shopping Trolley Policy, Road Safety Inspection and Tree and Woodlands Policy.

#### **3. Proposals**

- 3.1 The Cabinet is invited to note the Minutes attached at Appendix 1.

#### **4. Implications**

##### Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications.

##### Human Resource Implications

- 4.2 There are no human resource implications.

##### Legal Implications

- 4.3 There are no legal implications.

#### Equality Implications

- 4.4 There are no equality implications.

#### Environmental Implications

- 4.5 There are no environmental implications.

#### Implications for Key Priorities

- 4.6 None .

### **5. Consultations**

- 5.1 There have been no consultations in the formation of this report.

### **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 The attached Minutes are submitted of information.



**CRAIG HATTON**  
Corporate Director (Development and Environment)

Reference : RM/JS/II

For further information please contact Russell McCutcheon, Head of Environment and Related Services on telephone number 01294 541570

### **Background Papers**

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## **Environment & Infrastructure Policy Board Monday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2013**

At a meeting of the Environment & Infrastructure Policy Board of North Ayrshire Council held on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2013 at 2pm in the Council Chambers, Cunninghame House, Irvine.

### **Members Present:**

Cllr Ian Clarkson, Cllr Anthea Dickson, Cllr John Ferguson, Cllr John Easdale and Cllr John Bruce.

### **In Attendance:**

Russell McCutcheon, Head of Environment & Related Services  
Wallace Turpie, Streetscene Operations Manager  
Donald Wilson, Streetscene Manager  
Joe Smith, Senior Manager, Roads Network  
Lesley Lyon, Admin Assistant (Minutes)

### **Chair**

Cllr John Ferguson

### **Apologies for Absence:**

Cllr John Hunter, Cllr Elizabeth McLardy and Cllr Joe Cullinane

The Chair opened the meeting at 2pm and the Minutes of the previous Infrastructure & Design Policy Board were noted.

## **1. Abandoned Shopping Trolley Policy**

R McCutcheon explained that this was an update report from the Policy Board of 3<sup>rd</sup> December where the Board had asked that an exercise be carried out to establish actual costs involved for the retrieval and storage of the shopping trolleys.

R McCutcheon confirmed that Wallace Turpie had carried out a review of costs and that the actual cost is £33 per trolley. This includes administrative, labour, vehicle costs, storage and disposal costs, legal input and management costs in providing the service. It is therefore the case that the existing fee of £16 per trolley does not cover the costs. The draft Policy is now updated to reflect a fee of £33 per trolley which now covers actual costs incurred in providing the service.

Members were asked to approve the draft Policy before consultation begins with Stakeholders.

Cllr Clarkson asked what would happen if the Board were not agreed, if the Board could not come to an agreement.

Cllr Ferguson explained that the Board was not a decision making body and that the Cabinet Committee would make that decision.

On being asked, R McCutcheon suggested that the Policy Board could note that Officers drafted a Policy for consultation by stakeholders and thereafter submission to Cabinet for approval.

Cllr Dickson said that the Policy Board are one of the bodies that say the draft is of a standard to go to Stakeholders.

Cllr Clarkson agrees with the new figure of £33 per trolley, and wanted clarification in what the Policy Board remit would be if a draft Policy like this one comes up again?

Cllr Ferguson is looking for standardisation across all Policy Boards that they are an advisory board and not a decision making.

Cllr Bruce is happy with the content of the draft Policy.

Cllr Ferguson noted that the proposed Policy is ok to proceed to Stakeholders for consultation and then to Cabinet for approval.

## **2. Procedure for Road Safety Inspections**

J Smith advised of the procedures that North Ayrshire Council have in place for the inspection and instruction of safety repairs on adopted roads and footways in line with The Well Maintained Highways Code of Practice. J Smith went on to explain the response times for attending to observed road safety defects:-

Cat 1 High Risk (threat to life or property) 2 hour response

Cat 2 Repair within 48 hours

Cat 3 Repair within 30 working days

Cat 4 Repair with next available works programme

Cllr Easdale asked what category does road markings fall in to?

J Smith advised that this depends entirely on the condition of the road markings and of the location. Generally faded road markings would be identified as a Cat 4 fault and added to the programme of works.

Cllr Dickson asked if shortening the response times were a result of claims against the Council?

J Smith said that the response times were derived from the Code of Practice and had been in force for sometime. The timescale associated with attending to the faults also helped to protect the Council against public liability claims.

Cllr Clarkson asked why are the Roads Section checking street furniture?

J Smith explained that the street furniture inspected by Roads was in relation to signs, bollards and traffic signals, etc.

Cllr Clarkson asked how often are checks carried out?

J Smith said that Inspectors carry out checks on predetermined timescales set in accordance with the Well Maintained Highways Code of Practice. Any faults that are found have a works instruction raised to allow the repairs to be carried out. Faults can be logged using a variety of methods. Members of the public can either phone the call centre, use the Council website or log the fault using the new android or I-phone app.

Cllr Clarkson asked what category Irvine High Street would come in to?

J Smith advised that he is aware of the issues and has discussed this with the Irvine Town Centre Manager. J Smith said that he is looking to take a more holistic approach and to identify where, if any additional funding from projects being planned by others within the High Street may be available and to try to implement a collaborative approach. In the meantime it is possible that a temporary repair may be carried out in the interim, if there is a larger project on the horizon.

Cllr Easdale asked about the monoblock area on the bus stops in Dreghorn as they are sinking and water is pooling there resulting in pedestrians getting splashed.

J Smith advised that this would be classed as a cat 4 defect and that bus stops are susceptible to this, there are numerous locations in the same position throughout North Ayrshire. Although no timescales can be given. J Smith advised that these are added to our list of proposed works.

Cllr Easdale asked if bus companies contribute to these repairs?

J Smith advised that SPT provide funding and that this year the Roads Section have secured funding for a bus route, however bus companies do not provide any funding towards this work.

Cllr Easdale then asked if this work would get done quicker?

J Smith advised that we are continuing to pursue additional grant funding from SPT for work of this nature throughout North Ayrshire.

Cllr Dickson said that we are aware of the lack of roads funding, however are lower priorities such as low frequency roads being ignored?

J Smith advised that Roads were now following an asset management based approach to roads maintenance which covered all areas. J Smith advised that following submission of the 10 year Capital Plan to Cabinet, Roads were successful in attracting more investment for the roads infrastructure.

Cllr Bruce asked for a separate report for Arran as they have limited roads with street lighting – miles upon miles of dark roads some of which are the worst in Scotland. Road markings are non-existent and in the dark winter months are a hazard – can Arran have road markings despite the condition of the roads?

J Smith advised that all roads are treated and assessed in the same way and a disproportionate amount of money has been spent on Arran's roads in recent years. Road markings are refreshed every other year and that work on Arran had been carried out in 2012.

Cllr Bruce has asked if he can get a copy or a list of repairs that are getting carried out on Arran.

J Smith advised that this information would be made available to Member's on their page on Navigate.

Cllr Bruce would like a hard copy either on a weekly or monthly basis.

J Smith advised that routine works are carried out under a works instruction and this could amount to a lot of paperwork for Cllr Bruce.

Cllr Clarkson said talking about Arran being a separate case, can we get confirmation if Arran got a substantial amount of money?

J Smith confirmed that Roads had been successful in obtaining £600k of match grant funding from the Timber Transport Fund that was used on Arran's roads network. This would allow the continuation of work that had been carried out on the String Road in addition to work that would be carried out on the C147 at Kilpatrick. J Smith went on to say that he is also trying to secure additional funding for the mainland.

With no further questions the Cllr Ferguson said Policy noted.

### **3 Tree and Woodland Policy**

R McCutcheon explained that this report was an update report from the Policy Board of 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2012, where the Board asked that the Policy be amended to include reference to an annual report being provided. The Board had also further requested during a meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2012 that a

decision review process be developed similar to the Council complaints process for inclusion in the proposed Policy.

R McCutcheon confirmed that D Wilson had been in discussions with the Council's Contact Centre and advised that the Council is moving from a 3 Stage Complaints procedure to a 2 Stage Complaints procedure – frontline and investigation. With this in mind the proposed Tree and Woodlands Management Policy has been amended to contain a 2 stage review process.

It is proposed the review process for trees and woodlands will be triggered on receipt of an enquiry from a customer who believes that their issue has not been resolved to their satisfaction. Their complaint will be dealt with under the following 2 stage procedure.

### **Stage 1 – Frontline**

The customer can speak to the Streetscene Manager either in person or by telephone who will attempt to resolve the matter quickly. The customer can also contact the Council through the Contact Centre on 0845 603 0594 or write or send comments electronically using the "Contact Us" facility on our website.

### **Stage 2 – Investigation**

If the complainant is unhappy with the response from the Streetscene Manager, the Head of Environment & Related Services (EARS) will either investigate the complaint or appoint an officer to investigate the matter on his behalf.

The complainant will receive a written response from the Head of Environment & Related Services confirming the outcome of the review, together with reasons for the decision within 20 working days of the review request being received.

R McCutcheon has asked that this Policy be noted for submission to Cabinet for approval.

Cllr Clarkson asked who actions this policy if the arborist is off?

D Wilson advised that Streetscene Officers are trained in dealing with trees and can inspect works.

Cllr Clarkson asked if they can carry out work to trees?

D Wilson advised that there is a team of 4 who can carry out these works.

Cllr Dickson said problems with satellite signals or blocking light are ongoing issues with constituents and yet nothing is being done.

R McCutcheon said that this is not an easy one to solve, however if the tree or trees are healthy then the policy would be followed.

Cllr Dickson asked what level does a householder need to go to prove there is a problem?

R McCutcheon confirmed the annual monitoring of the Policy and an annual report would specifically look at the type of issues arising and that there is scope to review the Policy as and when appropriate.

D Wilson suggested that we monitor and report to this when we review the Tree and Woodland Policy in September (annual update report).

Cllr Easdale said that the two stage process is fine however someone somewhere needs to make a decision. Constituents try to work around this but where do they go if they are still not happy with the outcome.

R McCutcheon said that this would proceed via the 2 stage process in the Policy and if the constituent is still not happy then this would go to the complaints system within the Council. North Ayrshire Council are here to protect trees as well however sometimes there are health and safety issues to be considered such as if a tree becomes too big that it could be potentially dangerous.

Cllr Clarkson asked who would check trees within a Tree Preservation Order area and how often an inspection would take place.

D Wilson advised that it would be the Arborist. These are presently checked 5 yearly and are managed through the Planning Department.

With there being no further questions Cllr Ferguson agreed to note that the Policy is going to Cabinet.

#### **4. Future Agenda Items**

Waste Policy

Civil Contingencies

Cllr Ferguson brought the meeting to a close at 2.55 pm