

Community and Recreational Services Committee
1 September 1998

Irvine, 1 September 1998 - At a Meeting of the Community and Recreational Services of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Stewart Dewar, Jane Gorman, John Donn, James Jennings, Elizabeth McLardy, Peter McNamara, Margaret Munn, Robert Reilly, John Sillars and George Steven.

In Attendance

The Director of Community Services; The Head of Sport and Recreational Services; The Head of Cultural and Community Services (Community Services); D Nibloe, Principal Officer, Accountancy, (Financial Services); A Osborne, Corporate Policy Officer and S Paxton, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

Chair

Mr Dewar in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Patrick Browne and James Clements.

1. Minutes Confirmed

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 9 June 1998, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Leisure Centres

(a) Planned Maintenance

Submitted report by the Director of Community Services regarding the proposed closure of swimming pools for 2-3 week during the winter season for routine maintenance where the proposed programme of closure is as follows:-

(i) Auchendarvie Leisure Centre - Monday 23 November to Sunday 13 December 1998;

(ii) The Magnum Leisure Centre - Monday 7 December to Wednesday 23 December 1998; and

(iii) Vikingar! - Sunday 3 January to Friday 22 January 1999.

The Committee approved these proposals.

(b) Review of Attendances

Submitted report by the Director of Community Services reviewing the levels and patterns of attendance at the Council's operates four main leisure centres, viz. The Magnum Leisure Centre, Garnock Swimming Pool, Auchenhavrie Leisure Centre and Vikingar!.

Attendances at the Centres vary throughout the year with the summer months traditionally being the busy period although steady use does take place over the full twelve months. Overall, however, there has been a reduction in the level of attendance at these facilities. This has been especially marked at the Magnum Leisure Centre and the Auchenhavrie Leisure Centre. This decline may be explained by such factors as the growth of newer and, in some cases better, leisure facilities both locally and in other areas of Scotland; reduced opening hours which have limited access to the Centres; and the age and condition of some facilities.

Further investigation will be undertaken by the Directorate to identify means of addressing the declining level of attendance. This work will be undertaken in conjunction with the Service Reviews under the Council's Best Value Plan and in the context of the Steering Group on the proposed North Ayrshire Leisure Trust which is currently examining options for future service delivery.

During discussion on this item, the Committee also considered the possible use of school facilities for community leisure purposes.

The Committee agreed that the Director of Community Services (i) submit a further report on options for future service provision within Leisure Centres; and (ii) consult the Director of Education on the possible use of school facilities for community leisure purposes and report to a future meeting of the Committee.

3. Outdoor Sports Provision

Submitted report by the Director of Community Services on the level of provision of outdoor sports pitches and their present condition.

The Community Services Directorate currently operates fifty-nine sports pitches and two synthetic pitches and the Education Directorate a further thirty five pitches for use by schools throughout North Ayrshire. A recent survey undertaken by the Scottish Sports Council found that the level of provision for outdoor sports in North Ayrshire is inadequate in terms of the number of pitches and their condition and these findings are supported by the Directorate. This situation is further aggravated by the lack of adequate drainage which renders pitches unplayable during wet weather conditions.

In order to address the issues identified by the Sports Council and the Directorate and thereby protect the opportunity for the community to participate in outdoor sports it is proposed to establish policy

guidelines which would stipulate the following aims:-

- (a) the protection of existing sports pitches whose disposal would only be acceptable if replaced by improved provision;
- (b) the adoption of a programme of ground refurbishment to improve drainage and refurbish playing surfaces;
- (c) the identification of new pitches or changing facilities in areas where provision is inadequate;
- (d) the planning, on an area basis, of purpose built training or multi sport facilities;
- (e) the optimisation of community use of school sport pitches ;
- (f) the establishment of a programme of repairs for car parks, access roads, etc. and
- (g) the allocation of a low priority to the enhancement of Junior Football Club facilities where there is low community use.

In addition to these general proposals the Committee also discussed the changing facilities at Ardchoille Park, Stevenston, the use of the portable changing units within the Irvine area and the current conditions at Winton Rovers Junior Football ground in Ardrossan on which the Club has asked to meet the Council.

The Committee agreed (i) to approve the guidelines for policy on future pitch provision; (ii) that the Director of Community Services (A) include within future Capital bids proposals to carry out improvements to outdoor sports facilities; (B) investigate opportunities for external funding of these works; (C) liaise with the Director of Education to identify opportunities for dual use of sports facilities; (D) approve the operation of the additional facility at Ardchoille Park, Stevenston; and (E) refer consideration of the relocation of the available portable unit in the Irvine area to the Irvine Common Good Fund; and (iii) to meet with Winton Rovers Junior Football Club, Ardrossan.

4. Football Development Initiative

Submitted report by the Director of Community Services on (a) the work of the Football Development Officer in the first three months of the Initiative; and (b) future operational developments.

The Committee had agreed in August 1997 to employ a Football Development Officer for North Ayrshire in collaboration with the Scottish Football Association (SFA) and since taking up his post at the end of April 1998 the Development Officer has introduced a

number of initial programmes including a Coach Education Programme, the development of a Disabled Ambulant Cerebral Palsy Football Squad for juveniles and adults, Football Festivals and After School Soccer Centres.

It is also proposed to prepare a North Ayrshire Football Development Plan covering the next three years of the Scheme which will be complementary to the Directorate's Service Strategy and Sports Development Plans. The overall cost of the Scheme is £24,000, £10,000 of which will be met by the SFA with the balance of £14,000 being provided for through a joint programme with the Inverclyde National Sports Centre, Largs, £2,000 from existing resources and projected income of £10,000 from course fees.

The Committee agreed to authorise production of a North Ayrshire Football Development Plan.

5. Water Safety: Policy and Code of Practice

Submitted report by the Director of Community Services presenting a proposed Water Safety Policy for North Ayrshire.

Following a review of the methods in place for the management of safety adjacent to waterways within the Council's ownership a Water Safety Policy and Code of Practice has been produced. The Policy seeks to establish a framework for the Council in partnership with the local community to minimise the opportunity for incidents:-

- (a) increasing awareness of potential risk through promotional and educational activities with the support of recognised safety organisations; and
- (b) implementing systems of work that identify areas of potential risk and taking action to minimise the risk.

It was emphasised that the Policy refers only to the management and maintenance of inland water and coastal areas owned by and under the control of the Council and does not extend to other waterways where responsibility for the management remains with owners and/or occupiers.

The Committee approved the Water Safety Policy.

6. Community Use of Minibuses: Alterations to Administration Charges

Submitted report by the Director of Community Services on proposed amendments to the scheme for community use of transport.

The Committee, at its meeting on 4 June 1996, agreed a Scheme for community use of transport operated by the Community Services section, setting the administration charge at £6.00 plus VAT per booking. Since then 74 small bus permits have been issued to community groups who wish to make use of the Council's transport and a total of 360 bookings have been confirmed on average each year enabling over 6,000 people to benefit from social, recreational or educational visits.

Having reviewed current costs and in acknowledging that the administration charge has not increased since the inception of the Scheme, the undernoted increases are proposed with effect from week commencing 7 September 1998:-

| Current Fee | Proposed Fee |
|--|--|
| (a) £6.00 + VAT (£7.05) applicable whether the bus is booked for one day, one weekend or one week. | (a) £10.00 plus VAT (£11.75) per boo (b) £6.00 plus VAT (£7.05) for each add (c) £20.00 plus VAT (£23.50) per boo |

Where a group require to book more than one bus, an additional charge will be applied equivalent to the charge payable for the first vehicle. Fuel costs remain the responsibility of the group which must replace fuel used prior to returning the vehicle. An additional fee of £10.00 may also be levied against any group returning the bus in an untidy condition with no further booking being accepted until the additional cleaning cost has been paid.

The Committee approved the revised pricing policy and conditions.

7. COSLA Consultation Paper on the Future Development of Community Education in Scotland: “Promoting Learning - Developing Communities”

Submitted report by the Director of Community Services presenting a draft response to the COSLA consultative document on the future development of Community Education in Scotland.

The findings of a Task Group established by COSLA last summer, “to review the findings of the 1995 COSLA discussion paper on Community Education and Local Authorities” have now been issued for comment to Scottish local authorities, the Community Education Sector, voluntary organisations and others with an interest in the service. The Task Group’s recommendations called for a closer relationship between COSLA and the Scottish Office, in light of the

establishment of a Ministerial Working Group to examine how community education could contribute to government objectives relating to life long learning and tackling social exclusion.

COSLA sought Councils' responses to a number of specific questions related to the future delivery and development of the community education service. The Committee, in considering the response discussed the forthcoming HMI Report on the Council's Community Services Directorate and the positive contribution made by the community education service to economic and social development in North Ayrshire.

The Committee approved the terms of the draft response to the COSLA Task Group.

8. Fairlie: Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park: Southannan House and Estate

Submitted report by the Director of Community Services on Southannan House and Estate, Fairlie, which is currently owned by North Ayrshire Council and managed through the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Joint Committee.

Southannan House was formally used as the base for the Regional Park's Ranger Service but, as a result of its size, maintenance and repair costs in excess of £100,000 and deteriorating conditions it has become unusable as an operational base. The estate forms the grounds of Southannan House. The Ranger Service now operates from Castle Semple, Renfrewshire. Discussions are, however, in progress with Ayrshire and Arran Tourist Board to temporarily locate the Ranger Service to the Largs Tourist Information Centre. This would allow the Ranger Service to be based in North Ayrshire and for activities and events in the park to continue until an appropriate permanent facility has been provided.

Strathclyde Regional Council had undertaken a study into options for the development of Southannan House and Estate including the creation of a visitor's centre, ranger base, residential accommodation for courses and a caravan site none of which have been progressed. The considerable investment required in Southannan House is difficult to justify as the house is remote from the park area and if redeveloped could be in direct competition with other recreational and tourism facilities in the Largs area such as Kelburn Country Park and Blackshaw Farm. Moreover, a significant area of the Regional Park lies within the Garnock Valley and the Replacement Local Plan has recognised that there are considerable opportunities for developments to enhance tourism and leisure activities in particular for the establishment of a Visitor Centre and Ranger Base at Lochshore, Kilbirnie. The Directorate is currently considering alternative uses for Southannan House and Estate but to date no

parties have expressed an interest in the property.

The Committee agreed (a) to acknowledge the proposal to relocate the Clyde Muirshiel Ranger base from Southannan House to the Largs Tourist Information Centre on a temporary basis; (b) that the Director of Community Services seek the views of the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Joint Management Committee on the proposal to declare Southannan House and Estate surplus to requirements and, thereafter, refer the matter to the Support Services Committee for its consideration; (c) in principle, to approve the provision of a Visitor's Centre and Ranger base at Lochshore, Kilbirnie, subject to further reports from the Director of Community Services; and (d) to refer this matter to the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Joint Management Committee for consideration.

9. Proposed Lease of Property

Submitted reports by the Director of Community Services on requests to lease (a) Corsehill Sports Pavilion, Kilwinning; and (b) Aubrey Park Boating Hut, Largs.

The Committee agreed (i) to lease Corsehill Sports Pavilion to Corsehill United and Aubrey Park Boating Hut to the Largs Model Boat Club and (ii) to refer these matters to the Support Services Committee for consideration.

10. Declaration of Property Surplus to Requirements

Submitted report by the Director of Community Services on requests to declare surplus to requirements the former Irvine Area Offices at (a) the Town House Annexe; and (b) 47 Townhead.

The Committee agreed (i) to approve these requests; and (ii) to remit the matter to the Support Services Committee for consideration.

11. Requests to Declare Land Surplus to Requirements

Submitted reports by the Director of Community Services on requests to declare surplus to requirements the land at:-

- (a) Irvine: (i) Montgomerie Park and land south of Long Drive;
- (ii) Meadowhead Industrial Estate;
- (iii) Irvine Industrial Estate; and

- (iv) Speyburn Place;
- (b) West Kilbride: Rear of Main Street;
- (c) Dreghorn: Corsehillmount;
- (d) Saltcoats: Munro Walk;
- (e) Kilwinning: Pathfoot; and
- (f) Stevenston: Auchenhavie Golf Course.

The Committee agreed (A) with regard to item (a)(i) to defer the request to declare Montgomerie Park surplus to requirements until the demand for an additional golf course is established following the marketing of the site at South Gailes and to declare the land south of Long Drive surplus to requirements to be marketed for residential development; (B) with regard items (a)(ii) to (f) inclusive, to approve the requests; and (C) to remit these matters to the Support Services Committee for consideration.

12. Irvine: Scottish Maritime Museum

The Committee received a presentation from Mr Paul Jardine, Jura Consultants, Economic and Financial Analysis, Edinburgh on the Council's financial relationship with the Scottish Maritime Museum, Irvine.

The Committee agreed that the Director of Community Services consider the presentation and report to the next meeting on action the Council may take regarding its involvement with the Scottish Maritime Museum.

The meeting ended at 3.45 p.m.