

Cabinet
29 October 2013

IRVINE, 29 October 2013 - At a Special meeting of the Cabinet of North Ayrshire Council at 11.00 a.m. in Cunninghame House, Irvine.

Present

Willie Gibson, Alan Hill and Marie Burns

Also Present

Ruth Maguire and Donald Reid.

In Attendance

E. Murray, Chief Executive; I. Colvin, Corporate Director and J. McCaig, Interim Head of Community Care (Social Services and Health); Y. Baulk, Head of Finance and Property, T. Reaney, Procurement Manager and T. Burns, Asset Manager (Finance and Corporate Support); A. Sutton, Head of Community and Culture (Education and Skills); R. McCutcheon, Head of Environment and Related Services and K. Yeomans, Head of Development Planning; K. Dyson, Communications Officer and M. Anderson, Committee Services Officer (Chief Executive's Service).

Chair

Councillor Gibson in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

John Bruce, Anthea Dickson, Tony Gurney and Alex McLean.

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 meeting of Cabinet held on 8 October 2013 was confirmed and the Minutes signed in accordance with paragraph 7(1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

3. Write Off of Tenant Rent Arrears

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) which (a) advised of tenant rent arrears and court costs for former Council house tenants; and (b) sought approval to write off irrecoverable amounts.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the write-offs totalling £61,792.62, as detailed in Section 2 of the report.

4. Recovery of Housing Benefit Overpayments

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on a proposed revised policy on the recovery of Housing Benefit, which reflects the abolition of Council Tax Benefit.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the revised policy on the recovery of Housing Benefit, as set out at Appendix 1 of the report.

5. Treasury Management Strategy 2013/14 - Proposed Revisions

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on proposed amendments to the Annual Investment Strategy in relation to deposits with Government-backed institutions.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) approve amendments to the Annual Investment Strategy to increase the limit for government backed institutions from £25m to £35m; (b) approve an increase in the maximum holding by one counterparty from 50% to 75% of the total portfolio; and (c) note the appropriate amendments to the Treasury Management Practices.

6. Council Owned Houses on Arran

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) which (a) advised of the current status of a six of Council owned houses on Arran; and (b) proposed a way forward for the future of the properties.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) dispose of two of the houses at Ardow and Shiskine; (b) retain one house at Kilmory to provide temporary accommodation for new Council staff moving to the Island; and (c) note the position regarding the other three houses, at Brodick, Pirnmill and Corrie.

7. Revision to the Policy for the Transfer of Assets to the Community

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on proposed amendments to the Policy for the Transfer of Assets to the Community intended to assist applicants in the transfer process.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) note the proposed amendments to the Policy for the Transfer of Assets to the Community; and (b) approve the immediate implementation of the amended policy set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

8. Surplus Property - 19 Braehead, Dalry

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) which (a) advised of the outcome of an exercise to market the former office property at 19 Braehead, Dalry, which was by Education and Skills in January 2013; and (b) proposed the disposal of the property.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on issues of commercial sensitivity in relation to the proposed disposal.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the disposal of 19 Braehead, Dalry for the sum of £129,167.

9. North Ayrshire's Shared Services and Partnership Working

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on progress in taking forward Shared Services and partnership working in North Ayrshire, in terms of developments in Pan Ayrshire partnership working, the Ayrshire Strategic Alliance, other strategic partnership initiatives and internal shared service initiatives.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the effectiveness of the partnership working arrangements in place for North Ayrshire Council-led projects.

The Cabinet agreed (a) to note the current position and progress on partnership working, including shared services and (b) changes to the Minute of Agreement constituting the Ayrshire Shared Services Joint Committee, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

10. Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services and Health) which set out the fourth annual report of the Chief Social Work Officer covering the period April 2012 to March 2013, as required by the Scottish Government's Guidance.

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

- the distinction between befriending and mentoring services;
- the balance between psychological and social interventions in the delivery of addiction services; and
- the overall picture in terms of social services demand and provision in North Ayrshire.

The Corporate Director undertook to look into raising awareness of the mentoring services provided by the Council.

The Cabinet agreed to note and endorse the Chief Social Work Officer report set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

11. Development of an Ayrshire Sensory Impairment Service

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services and Health) on the development of a business case which identifies the benefits and potential risks of a single joint Ayrshire Wide Sensory Impairment Service, initially focused on the three Ayrshire Council Social Work Sensory Impairment Services.

The Cabinet agreed to progress a business case with regard to a joint Social Work Sensory Impairment service in Partnership with South and East Ayrshire and NHS Ayrshire and Arran.

12. Social Service Change Programme Update

Submit report by the Corporate Director (Social Services and Health) which (a) advised of progress in terms of the new Service User Journey model, in terms of policies and amendments to policy relating to the Eligibility Criteria, the Resource Allocation System and the revised Charging Policy.

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

- the level of housing disregard for non-dependents offered by the Council compared with that of other local authorities; and
- the intention to report back to the Cabinet on the outcome of the Charging Policy consultation.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) note the progress of the Change Programme in developing the new Service User Journey ahead of implementation; (b) approve the implementation of the Outcome Focused Eligibility criteria, effective from 5 November 2013; (c) approve the adoption of the Resource Allocation System, effective from 5 November 2013; and (d) approve, in principle, the proposed amendments to the Charging Policy, effective from 1 April 2014, subject to consultation with service users.

13. Review Of Community and Culture

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) on the revised structure and service delivery model within Community Development with regard to community and youth workers, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, other community support roles and the clerical support team.

Noted.

14. School Meals

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) on measures being developed to further improve the uptake of school meals throughout North Ayrshire, including the establishment of a working group to identify and develop proposals and the development of an action plan outlining a number of proposals for further consideration and implementation.

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

- ways to involve young people in developing school meals proposals; and
- the importance of increasing the uptake of free school meals.

The Cabinet agreed (a) that the Head of Community and Culture (Education and Skills) investigate whether the issue of school meals might be added to the agenda for the forthcoming Youth Council Conference and the Straight Talking event on "North Ayrshire: the best place to grow up"; (b) that consideration be given to (i) including the topic of school meals as part of the Cabinet's next meeting with the Youth Cabinet and (ii) seeking to involve a wider range of students in the discussion; and (c) otherwise, to note the content of the report.

15. War Memorials

Submit report by the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) on the management and maintenance of War Memorials, including progress made in the recording and assessment of the condition of War Memorials; the registration of the Bereavement and Burials Officer as North Ayrshire Council's War Memorial Officer; and the intention to seek financial assistance to undertake repairs and conservation work on War Memorials by accessing the Centenary Memorials Restoration Fund (CMRF).

Noted.

16. Team North Ayrshire and Account Management

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) on proposals presented by the Economic Development and Regeneration Board to encourage business growth, including an evaluation of the current practices and customer base and plans for further work culminating in a formal launch of 25 November 2013 of the enhanced offering for businesses.

Noted.

17. Saltcoats Town Hall Redevelopment Project

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) on the current progress of the Saltcoats Town Hall redevelopment project, including the current funding applications and the statutory approvals required to allow the project to progress.

Noted.

18. Measured Term Contract: Periodic Testing and Inspection of Fixed Electrical Installations

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) which (a) advised of the result of the tender exercise for the MTC for Periodic Testing and Inspection of Fixed Electrical Installations; and (b) presented a recommendation for the award of the contract.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the award of contract to Arthur McKay & Co Ltd and SSE Contracting for two years, with the option to extend for up to a further two years at the discretion of the Council.

19. Council House Development Project: John Galt Primary School, Irvine

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) which (a) advised of the result of the tender exercise for the appointment of a contractor for the construction of 80 new houses on the cleared John Galt Primary School site; and (b) presented a recommendation for the award of the contract.

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

- the background one of the submissions being deemed 'non-compliant'; and
- the community benefits associated with the contract.

The Cabinet agreed to award the contract to Cruden Building and Renewals, which submitted the lowest cost compliant tender.

20. South West Hub Territory Partnering Board: Minutes of 29 August 2013

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 29 August 2013.

Noted.

21. Economic Development and Regeneration Policy Board: Minutes of 11 September 2013

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) on the Minutes of the Meeting of the Economic Development and Regeneration Policy Board held on 11 September 2013.

Noted.

22. 1st Tier Joint Consultative Committee and Corporate Health and Safety Group: Minutes of 19 September 2013

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the Minutes of the Meeting of the 1st Tier Joint Consultative Committee and the Corporate Health and Safety Group held on 19 September 2013.

Noted.

23. Housing Revenue Account Business Plan Implementation Group: Minutes of 24 September 2013

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services and Health) on the Minutes of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan Implementation Group held on 24 September 2013.

Noted.

24. Exclusion of the Public and Press

The Cabinet resolved, in terms of Section 50(A)4 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, to exclude from the meeting, the press and the public for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

25. Sale of Claims

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) which sought delegated authority regarding the potential sale of a Council creditor claim.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) delegate authority to the Chief Executive and the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) or Head of Finance and Property, in consultation with the Leader and/or Depute Leader to participate in the auction process; and (b) approve the minimum reserve price at which the Council will sell, as set out within the report.

The meeting ended at 12.35 p.m.