

The Executive of North Ayrshire Council
9 March 2010

LARGS, 9 March 2010 - At a Meeting of The Executive of North Ayrshire Council at 2.55 p.m.

Present

David O'Neill, John Reid, Tom Barr, John Bell, Margaret McDougall and Peter McNamara.

Also Present

Margie Currie, Alex Gallagher and Alan Hill.

In Attendance

E. Murray, Chief Executive; A. Herbert, Corporate Director and C. Hatton, Head of Environment and Related Services (Finance and Infrastructure); B. Docherty, Corporate Director (Social Services and Health); I.T. Mackay, Solicitor to the Council; and J. Montgomery, General Manager, L. McEwan, Communications Manager, J. Murray, Community Planning Team Leader, S. Bale, Policy and Performance Officer and M. Anderson, Committee Services Officer (Chief Executive's Service).

Also In Attendance

P. Wiggins, Chief Executive (Irvine Bay Urban Regeneration Company).

Chair

Councillor O'Neill in the Chair.

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest by Members in terms of Standing Order 16.

2. Irvine Bay Urban Regeneration Company

The Executive received a presentation by the Chief Executive, Irvine Bay Urban Regeneration Company, on the company's regeneration work, including physical developments facilitated by the transfer of land from the Council.

The presentation provided details of:-

- the background to the establishment of the URC and its geographical remit;
- the various strands of its strategy to encourage regeneration;
- its initial areas of priority;
- the nature and sources of financial and other support available to the URC;
- plans for physical developments in Ardrossan, Saltcoats, Stevenston and Irvine; and
- the URC's partnership working and community engagement activities.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the implications of the proposed expansion of Clyde Marina, Ardrossan on other marinas in the area.

The Executive agreed to note (a) the content of the presentation; and (b) that the Chief Executive of the URC will attend the meeting of the Executive on 30 March 2010 to respond to any questions by Members.

3. Revenue Budget 2009/10: Budgetary Control Statement

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Infrastructure) on the budgetary control position for the Council at the end of January 2010.

The General Services and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue Budgets for 2009/10 were approved at a special meeting of the Council on 12 February 2009. In terms of General Services, the Council budgeted for an end of year deficit of £0.225m in 2009/10 and agreed to fund various one-off projects from balances. A favourable balance of £9.474m was brought forward from 2008/09, resulting in a projected surplus of £10.443 at 31 March 2010. The accumulated surplus on the Housing Revenue Account is projected to be £2.375m.

The report and appendices provided details of major variances in the budget to the end of January 2010.

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

- the work of the Business Analysts in supporting the identification of efficiency savings within IT;
- the preservation of the vacancy of the former Irvine Housing Association Office in Bridgegate House, pending the determination of the Council's wider asset management strategy; and
- the spend-to-save implications of the Teacher Refresh Programme.

The Executive agreed to (a) approve the balances outlined in the report; and (b) refer the report to the Scrutiny Committee for information.

4. Capital Monitoring to 31 January 2010

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Infrastructure) on the position in respect of capital expenditure at 31 January.

The capital budgets for the period 2009-2012 were approved at a special meeting of the Council held on 12 February 2009. Reports were presented to the Executive on 18 August 2009, 17 November 2009 and 26 January 2010, revising the approved programme. Further revisions for 2009/10 were also incorporated into the report agreed by the Council on 11 February 2010 as part of the budget process for 2010/11 to 2012/13.

The report and appendices provided information on actual expenditure on capital projects in respect of the General Services Fund and Housing Revenue Account for the period ending 31 January 2010.

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

- the importance of addressing the recurring issue of underspend in relation to the capital programme; and
- the monitoring arrangements in place to achieve planned capital programme expenditure in 2010/11 and 2011/12.

The Executive agreed to (a) note the actual expenditure to 31 January 2010 against budgets previously approved; and (b) refer the report to the Scrutiny Committee for information.

5. Approval of Final Draft Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) Action Plan for 2010/11

Submitted report by the Chief Executive seeking approval of the Final Draft Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) Action Plan 2010/11 on behalf of North Ayrshire Council.

The SOA Action Plan is an annual plan, which replaced the previous Community Plan and Council Plan. It describes the changes and improvements which the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) will make to deliver the Single Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Government.

At its meeting on 16 February 2010, the Executive noted a Consultation Draft of the SOA Action Plan 2010/11 and agreed to receive a final draft following completion of a wider consultation exercise. Section 2 of the report provided details of the consultation feedback received and the changes made to the draft in response.

The Final Draft SOA Action Plan 2010/11 was set out in the Appendix to the report.

The Community Planning Team Leader advised Members of the following further proposed amendments arising from recent consideration of the draft Action Plan by the Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT) and CPP Management Group:-

- the inclusion of a new action by the CPP itself to share information on all partners' capital programmes and plans;
- the deletion of all actions categorised as routine business; and
- improvements to the wording of some items within the draft Action Plan.

The Executive agreed to (a) approve, on behalf of North Ayrshire, the Final Draft Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) Action Plan 2010/11 set out in Appendix 1 to the report, subject to further minor amendments arising from recent consideration of the draft Action Plan by the Council's CMT and the CPP Management Group; and (b) recommend the Action Plan to the Community Planning Partnership Board for approval and adoption.

6. Write-Off of Former Tenant Rent Arrears

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Infrastructure) on former tenant arrears and court costs and seeking approval to write-off irrecoverable amounts.

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

The total value of ex-tenant rent arrears deemed to be irrecoverable amounts to £127,845.63. This sum represents 10.27% of the current total of rent arrears outstanding, and 0.31% of the Council's budgeted house rent income for 2009/10. In accordance with the Code of Practice, £67,525.42 has been written off with the approval of the Corporate Director (Finance and Infrastructure) after consultation with the Chief Executive.

A balance of £60,320.21, made up of accounts with balances of £1,000 or more remains to be written off.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the trend in terms of the number of debts to be written off and the types of circumstances surrounding arrears.

The Executive agreed to approve the write offs totalling £60,320.21 as set out in the report.

7. Additional Projects Funded from Excess Landfill Communities Fund (LCF) 2009/10

Submitted report by the Solicitor to the Council seeking approved for a further programme of projects to be funded from excess funds available through the Landfill Communities Fund (LCF) 2009/10.

At its meeting on 8 September 2009, the Executive was advised of the list of projects to be approved from the Council's LCF in 2009/10 and agreed to fund 9 projects for a sum of £76,833.

A total of 7 additional projects have been submitted for funding consideration from the £25,000 of excess funds likely to be available through the LCF in the current year and from projected funding of £12,000 for April 2010. Section 3 of the report outlined the projects in question. Appendices 1 and 2 to the report set out the funding criteria for assessing the projects and the levels of funding recommended for each.

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

- the geographical spread of the projects which have been funded to date;
- the likely fall in Landfill Tax Credit funding arising from the reducing amount of waste going to landfill;
- monitoring arrangements to ensure the proper expenditure of funding on projects; and
- the assessment of the application by Skelmorlie Bowling Club.

The Executive agreed to approve the additional projects as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, to be funded from the Council's Landfill Communities Fund in 2009/10 and, if required, projected April 2010 funding.

8. Staffing Structure – Environment and Related Services

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Infrastructure) on the key issues driving the requirement for changes in service delivery arrangements in Environment and Related Services, and seeking approval for the necessary staffing structure changes and specialist support to enable the Council to address these issues.

At its meeting on 3 June 2008, the Executive agreed to implement a re-structure of Property Services which created three new service areas, including Environment and Related Services. At the time, it was noted that there would be further changes within the new service areas arising from these structural changes.

Section 2 of the report set out the current arrangements for service delivery and outlined a number of drivers for change, including the implications of the National Waste Strategy, the “Clean and Green” and “Healthy and Active” agendas, the need to ensure value for money and efficiency, performance issues, the improvement of policies and service standards, and health and safety considerations.

Appendices A and B to the report showed the current and proposed staffing structures, respectively. Section 3 of the report provided details of the changes proposed, the rationale for them and how they would be introduced in 4 phases over a 6-month period.

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

- the role of the Project Manager for the procurement of a pan-Ayrshire Energy from Waste plant;
- future line management of school crossing patrol staff;
- arrangements for the collection of dog bin waste;
- plans to improve the information provided on the Council's website in respect of the schedule for emptying litter and dog waste bins;
- the use, where appropriate, of ringfencing of posts as part of the restructure exercise; and
- the rationale for the varying number of area staff within the various sections of the Service.

The Executive agreed to approve the implementation of the proposals set out at Section 3 of the report.

9. Director of Community Safety

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the new role of Superintendent Jim Coubrough of Strathclyde Police, as Director of Community Safety for North Ayrshire.

The current “Change Programme” requires efficiency and effective working by all public sector bodies, including examining new ways of working and a better integration of all public services. In light of this, the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive have held discussions with the Chief Constable of Strathclyde Police regarding the role of Superintendent Jim Coubrough.

The report advised that Superintendent Coubrough will continue as a Superintendent within Strathclyde Police and Sub Divisional Commander for North Ayrshire, but also take on the role of the Council's Director of Community Safety. Superintendent Coubrough will report to the Divisional Commander and to the Chief Constable in relation to Police operational matters, be line managed by them and retain his Police salary, terms and conditions. However, in addition, he will report to the Chief Executive of the Council for direction on a wide range of community safety issues, and attend "strategic" meetings of the Council's Corporate Management Team.

Appendix A to the report provided details of the existing joint working which goes on between the Council and Strathclyde Police on Community Safety. Section 3 to the report outlined further opportunities for joint working arising from the implementation of the proposed new structure shown at Appendix B.

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

- the intended duration of the role of Director of Community Safety beyond the posting of the initial post-holder;
- the role of community wardens;
- how the role of Director of Community Safety will enhance the joint working arrangements already in place through the Community Planning Partnership; and
- the issue of dual accountability.

The Executive agreed (a) to note that Superintendent Jim Coubrough will assume the role of Director of Community Safety for North Ayrshire; (b) that the new Director of Community Safety submit a report to a future meeting of the Executive on his objectives for the role; and (c) to receive a further report on the areas for improved joint working and proposals for evaluation.

10. Building Services Consultancy

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Infrastructure) on the proposed use of the Negotiated Procedure to appoint a consultant.

At its meeting on 26 January 2010, the Executive approved the engagement of a consultant to provide advice on a range of service delivery options for Building Services. Using the Buying Solutions Framework Agreement, three consultants were issued with a specification/brief with a tender return date of 20 February 2010. No bids were received on the tender return date.

The report requested approval, in accordance with the Standing Orders Relating to Contracts, to use the Negotiated Procedure to appoint a consultant. This procedure allows a Chief Officer to consult and negotiate with one or more service providers and specifies the condition under which works, goods or services will be provided. The procedure will enable the consultancy to be delivered within the timescale required by the Council.

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

- possible reasons for the lack of bids by the tender return date; and
- arrangements for the implementation of the Negotiated Procedure.

The Executive agreed to approve the use of the Negotiated Procedure to appoint a consultant to review Building Services.

11. Contract for Vehicle Tracking System

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Infrastructure) seeking approval to enter into negotiations for the extension of the contract for the supply of a vehicle tracking system in terms of paragraph 7.6 of the Council's Standing Orders Relating to Contracts.

The Council's Roads Service fleet of vehicles required to install a vehicle tracking system to facilitate better management and use of the vehicles. A formal tendering procedure was followed in 2009 and, in early June 2009, approval was given by the Chief Executive, in terms of the Standing Orders for Contracts, to accept a tender for the supply of this equipment from Exactrak Limited.

The company has supplied and fitted 10 Basic Tracking Systems to 6 vans and 4 other vehicles. The equipment has performed to a highly satisfactory standard and it would be of benefit to the Council to extend the number of units operating the equipment.

In terms of the Standing Orders Relating to Contracts, the Council has the opportunity to extend a contract by means of negotiation rather than go back out to tender, where the material, service or work is of a similar nature. The authority of the Executive requires to be obtained for such a procedure.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the number of addition units to be purchased.

The Executive agreed to authorise the Head of Infrastructure and Design Services to enter into negotiations with Exactrak Limited, for the supply of vehicle tracking system equipment for the Roads Service fleet of vehicles.

12. Review of Care Packages – Spend to Save Initiative

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services and Health) on the outcome of the Spend to Save initiative in relation to the Review of Care Packages.

Two experienced social workers were appointed on 1 June 2009 to review care packages. They commenced their reviews with the Mental Health Service and then moved on to the Learning Disabilities Service. Reviews are now being completed across the Independent Living Services. To date, 66 care packages have been reviewed and the Spend to Save initiative has achieved savings of £85,108 over the current financial year and it is anticipated that this will project into full year savings in 2010/11 of £194,541.

The initiative has ensured that care packages provide the required level of support while allowing service users to maximise their potential for self-care and independence.

Arising from the initiative, it is proposed to reconfigure care management and associated support arrangements. This will ensure that proposed support packages in excess of £30,000 p.a. are reviewed by the Adult Resources Group; consideration is given as to how costs and quality issues associated with using particular providers might be made accessible to care managers; and how the number of people receiving direct payment and Independent Living Fund payments might be increased.

Noted.

The meeting ended at 4.25 p.m.