

The Executive of North Ayrshire Council
18 August 2009

IRVINE, 18 August 2009 - At a Meeting of The Executive of North Ayrshire Council at 2.30 p.m.

Present

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

Also Present

Anthea Dickson, Alex Gallagher and Elisabeth Marshall.

In Attendance

I. Snodgrass, Chief Executive; E. Murray, Chief Executive Designate; B. Docherty, Corporate Director (Social Services); C. Kirk, Corporate Director (Educational Services); T. Orr, Corporate Director and O. Clayton, Head of Housing and Building Services (Property Services); A. Herbert, Assistant Chief Executive and T. Reaney, Procurement Manager (Finance); I. Mackay, Assistant Chief Executive and R. Forrest, Planning Services Manager (Legal and Protective); J. Montgomery, General Manager; S. Bale, Policy Officer; M. McKeown, Team Leader - Committee Services; and A. Wattie, Communications Officer (Chief Executive's).

Chair

Councillor O'Neill in the Chair.

1. Declarations of Interest

In terms of Standing Order 16, Councillor O'Neill declared an interest in item 7 on the agenda in respect of his involvement with Trinity Trust.

2. Single Outcome Agreement Annual Report 2008/09

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the North Ayrshire Council Single Outcome Agreement Annual Report 2008/09.

As part of the Concordat between the Scottish Government and local authorities in Scotland, each Council was required to reach a Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) with the Scottish Government, based on a set of 5 national strategic objectives, 15 national outcomes and 45 national indicators. Appropriate local outcomes were developed by the Council to align with national outcomes and appropriate indicators were selected to measure progress against the local outcomes.

Although the SOA was between the Council and the Scottish Government, Community Planning Partners were involved in the process and provided information to be included, particularly around health and crime indicators. The Council approved the finalised SOA on 25 June 2008 and it was signed jointly by the Leader of the Council and John Swinney, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth in July of that year.

The Scottish Government requires a progress report on the Single Outcome Agreement for 2008/09 by September 2009. The Annual Report for 2008/09 was appended to the report. There are 34 outcomes contained within the Single Outcome Agreement for 2008/09 and 109 indicators to measure progress against these outcomes. Each local outcome is aligned to the relevant national outcome to allow progress against each to be monitored. Of the 109 indicators included in the SOA, 47% met the target for 2008/09, 34% did not meet the target for 2008/09, 19% were not yet available, and 6%, whilst not meeting the target, had nevertheless improved from the baseline. As well as reporting on progress against the outcomes in the SOA, the Annual Report also provided a qualitative assessment to cover areas such as the effectiveness of partnership working, and the nature of community engagement and how it is informing priority outcomes and arrangements to support the delivery of agreed outcomes.

The Scottish Government also requested that an annual report on the Fairer Scotland Fund, which is known locally as the Fairer North Ayrshire Fund (FNA) be included as part of the SOA Annual Report. An FNA Annual Report was produced and was approved by the CPP Board on 18 June 2009. This will be submitted to the Scottish Government at the same time as the SOA Annual Report.

Members expressed the view that the possible negative impact of the economic downturn on the delivery of SOA outcomes should be highlighted to the Scottish Government.

The Executive agreed to (a) note the progress achieved against the outcomes and indicators in the Single Outcome Agreement 2008/09; (b) authorise the Chief Executive to submit the Annual Report to (i) the Scottish Government with a covering letter highlighting the possible negative impact of the global economic downturn on the delivery of SOA outcomes; and (ii) the Community Planning Partnership Board at its meeting on 10 September 2009 for information; and (c) remit the report to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

3. Revenue Budget 2009/10: Budgetary Control Statement

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) on the budgetary control position for the Council at the end of June 2009.

The General Services and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue Budgets for 2009/10 were approved at the 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 and agreed to fund various one-off projects from balances. Early projections based on expenditure levels indicate that the Council will have a net surplus of £1.082m at the year end. With a favourable balance of £9.474m brought forward from 2008/09, a cumulative surplus of £10.556m is projected. The accumulated surplus on the Housing Revenue Account is projected to be £1.619m - this will be reinvested in the Council's housing stock.

The report and appendices provided details of major variances in the budget to the end of June 2008. Action will be taken to address any potential overspends where these arise. The Chief Executive Designate advised that a strategic review of how Services were funded would be undertaken and a report brought back to Members in due course.

The Executive agreed to (a) approve the balances outlined in the report; (b) receive further reports on proposed actions to address the potential overspend in Social Services; and (c) remit the report to the Scrutiny Committee for information.

4. Capital Monitoring to 30 June 2009

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) on the position in respect of capital expenditure at 30 June 2009 and on the revised programme for future years.

The capital budgets for the period 2009-2012 were approved at the special meeting of the Council held on 12 February 2009. Since then, affordability levels have changed (as set out in appendix 1 to the report) due mainly to balances brought forward from 2008/09, plus an acceleration of £2.318m of General Capital Grant being received from the Scottish Government in 2009/10 in an attempt to support economic recovery.

Financial Services have held discussions with Services and capital expenditure plans have been reviewed. Appendix 2 to the report provided a summary of various movements in the approved capital programmes since February 2009. More details of these changes, on a project by project basis, were set out in appendix 3.

Appendix 4 to the report provided details of actual spend against the general service capital expenditure to 30 June 2009. This amounted to £4.027m or 12% of the projected outturn for 2009/10 of £33.378m.

Appendix 5 summarised actual expenditure on the HRA capital programme to 30 June 2009, which amounted to £2.258m or 10.9% of the Projected Outturn of £20.612m. Income from the sale of Council houses in the first quarter amounted to £0.334m, 18% of the projected annual total of £1.75m. As a result of the above, net capital expenditure, or borrowing, is projected to increase by £0.95m.

The Executive agreed to (a) note the acceleration of capital grant from the Scottish Government; (b) approve the budget movements set out within the report; and (c) remit the report to the Scrutiny Committee for information.

5. National Planning Framework for Scotland 2

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Protective) on the publication of the National Planning Framework (NPF) 2 and seeking agreement on the Council's response for submission to the Scottish Government in respect of the proposed Action Programme.

The Scottish Government published the finalised National Planning Framework (NPF) 2 on 25 June 2009. NPF2 replaces the first NPF published in 2004 and is supported by a proposed Action Programme setting out how and by whom the national developments and other key elements of the NPF Strategy will be implemented. While NPF2 is now finalised, the Scottish Government has invited comments on the Action Programme. The Action Programme will be delivered with lead partners and other bodies from June 2009 to June 2010, with the first annual review of the Action Programme scheduled for June 2010.

A number of aspects of NPF2 are supported by North Ayrshire as outlined in appendix 1 to the report. Issues remain however in respect of:-

- potential developments in relation to power generation and maritime decommissioning at Hunterston.
- proposed Electricity Grid Reinforcements, including the construction of a new 275K South-West Scotland overhead electricity transmission line and associated infrastructure, from 2009 onwards.
- implications arising relative to Scottish Government Policy on both higher activity and low level radioactive wastes.
- the removal of any reference to a bypass for the town of Kilwinning.

A new power station and transshipment hub at Hunterston is designated as a national development. This development is described in the text of NPF2 as a "clean coal fired power station, container transshipment hub, maritime construction and decommissioning yard, and associated energy and industrial development". Whilst this description has not changed since December 2008, elements covered by the designation have changed, giving cause for concern. In commenting on the draft NPF2 document, the Council requested more specific assurance on the implementation of carbon capture at Hunterston. This assurance has not been given in NPF2, with the "power station" and "carbon capture" not linked and appearing as separate elements.

The Scottish Government Energy Policy Unit has confirmed the current Scottish position on Carbon Capture Storage (CCS)/Carbon Capture Readiness (CCR) i.e that the Scottish Government will only consider applications for new gas, oil, biomass, waste-to-energy and coal power station applications on or above 300 MW where the developers:

- demonstrate that they have sufficient space on or near the site to accommodate carbon capture equipment in the future;
- undertake an assessment into the technical and economic feasibility of retrofitting carbon capture technology;
- propose a suitable area of deep geological storage offshore for the storage of captured CO₂;
- undertake an assessment into the technical and economic feasibility of transporting the captured CO₂ to their proposed storage area; and
- if necessary, apply for and obtain Hazardous Substance Consent (HSC).

The Scottish Government Development Department confirms that the intention behind the national development is to facilitate the implementation of a clean coal fired power station. Whilst the intention may be clear to the Scottish Government, it was nevertheless proposed that the Council secure the position by formally requesting that the Scottish Government link the elements covered by the designation to the criteria set out by the Scottish Government Energy Policy Unit through the wording in the Action Programme. A proposed form of wording was set out appendix 2 to the report.

The Council's previous submission on the draft NPF2 also recorded dissatisfaction that the proposed Framework had not demonstrated any national need to extend a presumption in favour of maritime decommissioning work to Hunterston and requested that reference to decommissioning be deleted. A specific concern was in relation to ship breaking. No change has been made in the finalised NPF2. The Scottish Government now advise that NPF2 indicates that Hunterston offers the "potential" to undertake such work, for which there is a demonstrable need given the maturity of the nation's oil and gas industry and the new opportunities in offshore renewables. The legal requirement is for Local Development Plans to "take account" of the NPF and the opportunity is presented by the preparation of the LDP to interpret what is meant by a decommissioning yard and whether it might be restricted to its justification. It was proposed that the Council should seek to have the wording in the Action Programme in relation to decommissioning linked to its justification and expressly excluding ship breaking.

The Executive agreed that the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Protective) in consultation with the Leader of the Council, write to the Chief Planner and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth requesting (i) that the Scottish Government formally link, through revised wording in the Action Programme, the elements covered by the designation of the national development at Hunterston to the five criteria for Carbon Capture Readiness (CCR), set out by the Scottish Government Energy Policy Unit; (ii) that the element "decommissioning" be linked, by revised wording in the Action Programme, to identified national need in the oil and gas industry and new opportunities in offshore renewables, and expressly excluding ship breaking; (iii) that North Ayrshire Council be kept fully informed of actions relating to the electricity grid reinforcements or sub sea cables affecting the area; and (iv) that it be recognised that the Council continues to reserve its position until statements regarding radioactive waste are explained and discussed, if necessary in NPF 3.

6. Summary Justice Reform - Unified Courts Administration in the Sheriffdom of North Strathclyde

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Protective) on the consultation exercise being undertaken by the Scottish Court Service (SCS) in connection with the Summary Justice Reform programme and the proposed Unified Courts Administration in the Sheriffdom of North Strathclyde which includes North Ayrshire District Court at Irvine.

The Criminal Proceedings etc (Scotland) (Reform) Act 2007 was passed by the Scottish Parliament in January 2007. This Act contains the legislative provisions that authorise the replacement of District Courts with Justice of the Peace Courts and unifies the administration of these Courts under the management of the SCS. The unification of the administration of Courts will be completed on a phased basis over the six Sheriffdoms in Scotland, with 4 having already unified during 2008/09.

The Scottish Court Service is currently carrying out a consultation with partner organisations and the public to consider the draft operational plan prepared by the SCS to set out how the unified Court system will look and operate. The consultation paper sets out the details of the SCS proposals for the future delivery of Court related services, including the collection and enforcement of fines and other financial penalties. Written comments on the paper are requested by 20 August 2009. Responses will be analysed and considered to help the SCS formulate a final plan for the future set up of the Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Courts in North Strathclyde Sheriffdom.

North Ayrshire District Court is currently located on the ground floor of the Town House, High Street, Irvine, and the administration of court business is carried out by four full time members of Council staff and one solicitor who works part time. It is proposed that the District Court in Irvine will transfer over to the administration of the SCS on 23 November 2009, with relevant staff also transferring. Discussions have already taken place between SCS and North Ayrshire Council Human Resource Service in this regard.

SCS proposes that the Justice of the Peace Court at Irvine will operate from the current District Court premises at the Town House, Irvine. The administrative staff who will transfer to SCS will remain at their present location. SCS are currently recruiting Legal Advisers to meet the shortfall in legal resources required to provide full support to all the Justice of the Peace Courts in North Strathclyde. A "North and East Ayrshire Transitional Arrangements Group" has been set up to allow key stakeholders to work together and take forward and implement a range of actions to ensure successful unification. North Ayrshire Council will be represented on this group by the Chief Legal Officer (Licensing and District Court). The terms of the SCS proposals as set out in the consultation paper give due regard to both the operation of a criminal court in North Ayrshire and also recognise the value of staff to be transferred to the service from the Council.

The arrangements for occupation of the various parts of the Town House will see the Licensing Office occupy the upper floor of the building with one room located on the ground floor as a publicly accessible office. In exchange one room on the upper floor will be occupied by the SCS. The details of the lease for SCS will be undertaken by the Council's Estates officers. As the Town House forms an important part of local celebrations and activities in Irvine, notably the annual Marymass celebrations, SCS have informally advised that they would seek to continue this involvement with the local community, making their part of the building available on such occasions.

The Executive agreed to (a) authorise the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Protective) to submit a response to the SCS supporting the proposals set out in the Consultation Paper; and (b) receive a progress report at a future meeting.

7. Town Centre Regeneration Fund

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Protective) on the outcome of Tranche 1 of the Scottish Government's Town Centre Regeneration Fund and on potential Tranche 2 bids.

In respect of Tranche 1, the Council submitted 4 bids directly, and supported 2 bids by Irvine Bay Urban Regeneration Company (URC) and 1 by Cumbrae Development Company. Details of the bids were set out in the report. The Scottish Government allocated £40m of the £60m Fund in Tranche 1 with the balance to be allocated in Tranche 2. None of the Council's bids for funding were supported. The bids by Irvine Bay Regeneration Company (the restoration of Jack's Bar and the refurbishment of former Parcel Office at 2 Vernon Street, both Ardrossan), together with Cumbrae Development Company's bid in respect of the Garrison House, Millport, were successful, bringing the total awards to North Ayrshire so far to £1,847,698. The two URC-led bids will require support from the Council to proceed in respect of planning and staff resources. The Cumbrae Development Company bid is supported by the Council, but there will be no funding or resource implications beyond usual development and planning considerations.

Competition for funding was, as expected, high with the fund receiving 133 bids totalling a value of £125m in Tranche 1. Almost every Council area submitted one or more bids, with 22 of the 32 local authorities receiving awards for a total of 48 towns across Scotland. Feedback provided by the Scottish Government revealed details of the weighting for the criteria used in assessing applications for the first time. It is clear that emphasis was given to bids which could secure sustainable employment opportunities and future investment. Less weight was given to environmental and visual enhancements which formed the majority of the Council bids.

Considering feedback received from the Scottish Government and the limited opportunity to increase their scoring, it was proposed that none of the Council's Tranche 1 bids be resubmitted. Appendix 2 set out proposed Tranche 2 bids as follows:-

- Kilbirnie, town centre parking (Garnock Street Police Station) (£500,000)
- Largs Hyndman Green/Tron Place Largs (£200,000)
- Irvine, Trinity Church regeneration (£tbc)
- West Kilbride, town centre car parking (£100,000)

The refurbishment of Bridgegate House, Irvine was previously identified as a possible bid. This is a project which the Council is committed to deliver in partnership with the URC. As an extensive and detailed project, it is not at a sufficiently mature stage to be submitted as a TCRF bid. This being the case, options were reviewed for possible Irvine bids and Trinity Church has been identified as a project which is linked to existing regeneration plans, including the wider Bridgegate area works, and as a proposal which would both preserve the life of an exceptional building, provide employment and introduce a new use to the town centre. It is recognised that there is still a leaning towards environmental schemes with the proposed bids but it is intended that a stronger regeneration context be provided.

The Executive emphasised the need to ensure that the bids submitted to Tranche 2 reflect the Scottish Government's assessment criteria

The Executive agreed to (a) authorise the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Protective) to develop and submit the bids identified in the report for Irvine, Kilbirnie, Largs and West Kilbride; and (b) receive a report on the outcome of the bids at a future meeting.

8. Procurement

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) on the activities of the Corporate Procurement Unit in 2008/09, and on developments in the wider procurement of services.

Good procurement practices ensure that the Council's governance framework is satisfied and savings and efficiencies are achieved. The Corporate Procurement Unit (CPU) was established in 2005 within Financial Services to develop and drive forward the Council's approach to corporate procurement. Since then, the Unit has made a significant contribution to improving the governance arrangements for procedures and practices in relation to contracts, and has established the foundations for the potential generation of savings through the procurement of commodities.

Appendix 1 to the report summarised the activities and achievements of the Unit during 2008/09. Appendix 2 to the report set out the Corporate Procurement Strategy for the period 2009-2012. The strategy concentrates on four key themes of Procurement Infrastructure, Processes and Systems, Strategic Sourcing, and Skills, Training and Education Tools. The roll out of the strategy will be essential in securing the savings and efficiencies required in the current economic climate for reinvestment in the Council's key objectives.

The Council's relationship with Scotland Excel, the local authority centre of procurement expertise set up under the McLelland review, will require to be closely monitored to ensure that maximum benefit is obtained from the services offered. Members expressed disappointment that Scotland Excel had failed to date to deliver expected savings to Councils. It was noted that Dorothy Cowie, Director of Scotland Excel, would be visiting the Council on 1 September 2009 and this would provide an opportunity for the Council to raise issues.

As part of the Council's emerging Change Programme and the wider issue of procurement, a major piece of work requires to be undertaken to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council's operations and determine what action is required to reconfigure these services to meet the challenges of a changing environment both from a financial and service perspective.

In terms of the Council's Change Programme a fundamental review of how services within the Council are procured will be undertaken during the course of 2009/10.

The Executive agreed to (a) note the activities of the Corporate Procurement Unit; (b) receive a further report on the procurement of services as part of the Council's Change Programme; and (c) receive a report on the progress of Scotland Excel at a future meeting.

9. The Operation and Impact of the Two New Children's Units in North Ayrshire

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services) on the impact of the two new Children's Units opened by Social Services in recent years.

The first new unit, Achnamara, at Nelson Road, Saltcoats opened in July 2007. The second new unit, The Meadows, at James Crescent, Irvine, opened in July 2008. Both units are located centrally, with easy access to public transport and community activities.

A range of stakeholders was consulted to ascertain the impact of the new smaller unit model, including service users, residential staff, social workers, the Looked After and Accommodated Health Team, and the Education Outreach Teams who deliver services to accommodated young people.

The overall function of the units is to provide a welcoming, safe and nurturing environment. In both units, staff identified that the contemporary design, location and high standard of furnishings have resulted in an increased sense of homeliness and belonging for young people, evidenced by a significant decrease in vandalism and a reduction in repairs. An increase in staffing ratios has also allowed staff to engage more positively with the young people and to provide one-to-one support. This has resulted in better provision of care and care plans being progressed more quickly. Both the new environment and the improved staffing levels have had a positive impact on the staff teams, with staff reporting that they feel more empowered, positive and enthusiastic about their work. Whilst this response from residential staff is extremely encouraging staff did nevertheless highlight their concerns that the greatest threat/pressure on the continuing success of the small unit model lies in the fact that they are currently operating over capacity.

Young people have stated that the move to smaller units has resulted in them feeling more settled, supported and empowered. They are taking ownership and pride in their environment and recognise the advantages of having individual en-suite rooms, which are spacious and afford privacy, security and an opportunity to personalise their living environment.

Young people who have left the units have also been extremely complimentary about the staff teams and the support provided. Relationships do not cease when young people move on as they are encouraged to phone or visit should they require support, company or advice. There is also a recognition that staff advocate on their behalf. The increase in staffing ratio has increased the ability to form trusting and meaningful relationships and staff have more time to include young people in discussions and help to prepare them for meetings. Although the structure and location of the units has altered, and whilst there is minimal contact with neighbours, young people reported that generally they continue to feel neighbours and the public stigmatise them, simply because they live in a Children's Unit. Other concerns related mainly to over-crowding and the effect that this can have including increased levels of noise and access to public living spaces being restricted.

Responses from partners such as education and health staff were overwhelmingly positive. Partners indicated that the two new units were more welcoming, comfortable, safe, accessible, spacious and better suited to young people's needs. The majority of partners have noted a more relaxed atmosphere, with the overall level of care having improved. In addition, it is felt that the new layout and style of the units is less institutional and more homely.

It is considered that the introduction of smaller units, coupled with improved staffing levels and investment in staff training, have led to an improvement in the standard and quality of care being offered by North Ayrshire Council. This has meant better assessment of individual needs, improved care planning, a more settled and homely environment and less vandalism. In addition, young people have benefitted from relating to fewer staff. Good staff cover has resulted in staff being able to provide good support to young people in times of crisis. Levels of vandalism and violence appear overall to be significantly reduced. This has had a positive impact on young people as well as on the morale of staff groups. Levels of unauthorised absence and non-attendance at school are lower as there is no culture of absconding and non-attendance at school.

Plans are being progressed for a further two new six bedded units to replace the existing units at Harley Place, Saltcoats and Seaton Terrace, Irvine. It is hoped these units will be operational by December 2010 and March 2011 respectively. The outcome of the planning process is awaited in relation to two potential sites.

The Executive welcomed the positive impact that the small unit model has had for young people being accommodated, staff within the Units, and other stakeholders.

Noted.

10. Throughcare Service

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services) on how the Council compares with other authorities in terms of the destinations of young people leaving care.

In March 2009, the Commissioner for Children and Young People in Scotland laid a report entitled "Sweet 16: One Year On - Is Life Any Sweeter?" before the Scottish Parliament. This report followed up on the original "Sweet 16? The Age of Leaving Care in Scotland" published in 2008, and included a survey of progress made by local authorities in implementing the recommendations of the earlier report. All 32 local authorities responded to the survey but some only reported on particular aspects of the survey.

North Ayrshire was one of only two authorities who reported that relations between Throughcare and the Council's Housing Department had "improved substantially" over the past 3 years, with an active protocol in place. This protocol delivers special arrangements for care leavers in order that they do not need to be deemed homeless in order to access accommodation. The report also noted that in terms of good practice, North Ayrshire is one of a small number of authorities who do not utilise bed and breakfast as an acceptable route to accommodate this group of young people. All young people leaving care in North Ayrshire are accommodated in a positive destination of their choice, be this supported carers, supported accommodation, furnished lets or their own tenancy. North Ayrshire compares well with the other authorities mentioned in the report in terms of young people moving to positive destinations with no young people being roofless or homeless as was indicated by some other authorities.

From the national statistics collected in relation to pathways plans for 2007/08 it is reported that on average 55% of young people ceasing to be looked after beyond school leaving age had a pathway plan on the date they were discharged and 57% had a pathway co-ordinator. For the same period the report states that in North Ayrshire only 11% of young people ceasing to be looked after had a completed pathway plan and co-ordinator. The national statistics collectively refer to all young people looked after at home as well as those looked after and accommodated. On the basis of service capacity in North Ayrshire, a Throughcare Service is only delivered to those young people who have previously been accommodated and not those who have been looked after at home. In North Ayrshire for those young people who were previously looked after and accommodated, 98% had completed pathway plans and had pathways co-ordinators. This continues to be the case. North Ayrshire Council therefore performs above the national average in this area. In any given year one or two young people may refuse to engage in completing a pathway plan. They have a right to make this choice.

North Ayrshire also compares favourably with other authorities in terms of the destination of young people leaving care. All young people are offered appropriate accommodation to meet their needs. Social Services and Housing Services have developed positive working practices and a joint protocol in relation to supporting this group of young people. North Ayrshire does not consider bed and breakfast a suitable option for this client group unlike some other authorities. Of the young people currently known to the Throughcare Team none are roofless or homeless.

The Council employs a full time temporary worker funded from Fairer North Ayrshire Funds who's focus is to assist young people involved with the Throughcare Service in to education, training or employment. The worker is about to pilot a new government initiative which uses activity agreements as a tool in working with difficult to reach groups. North Ayrshire compares well with comparative authorities in relation to the economic activity of young people who have been accommodated.

The Executive welcomed the impact that the Council's Throughcare Service has had on promoting and encouraging positive destinations for young people leaving care in North Ayrshire.

Noted.

11. Cash in Transit Service

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) seeking approval to invite tenders for the provision of a Cash in Transit Service to uplift cash from schools and other Council premises.

The Executive agreed to (a) authorise the Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) to proceed with the procurement of a Cash in Transit Service for a 3 year period, with the option of a 2 year extension; and (b) receive a further report on the outcome of the tendering process at a future meeting.

12. Homeless Service Provider Contracts

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) seeking authorisation to enter into a contractual agreement with homeless providers throughout North Ayrshire.

Housing Services fund a number of service providers to deliver various prevention, alleviation and resettlement services to people who are at risk of becoming homeless or who are affected by homelessness. These Services, which have been funded through formerly ringfenced homeless task force monies, assist Housing Services to meet the objectives within the Homelessness Strategy 2007-2010.

No formal contractual agreements are currently in place with providers for the provision of these services. The report set out the terms of proposed 1 year contracts, commencing from 1 April 2009 and with the option of 2 year extensions, in respect of:-

- Barnardos Integrated Children's Service
- Women Aid Children's Service
- Women's Aid Addiction Service
- Community Housing Advocacy Project - Education for the Prevention of Homelessness
- Community Housing Advocacy Project - Information and Advice Service

Each contract sets out a range of responsibilities and obligations each service provider must meet to deliver high quality services. Performance indicators will be collated and analysed to ensure targets are being met and performance is maintained at a high standard. Approval of the contracts will support the Council's efforts towards achieving Value for Money and will, in addition, enhance performance reporting and target setting and allow Housing Services to adopt more stringent monitoring of service provision.

The Executive agreed to approve the terms of the proposed contracts with service providers, as set out in the report.

13. Specialist Asbestos Surveys for Housing Stock

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) seeking authority to appoint a group of specialist asbestos surveying firms to complete the survey of Housing Stock.

At its meeting on 18 November 2008, the Executive authorised the Corporate Director (Property Services) to advertise and seek tenders for the provision of specialist asbestos surveys. Following evaluation, five of the firms that submitted tenders are considered to meet the economic and quality criteria which represent Best Value to the Council. It was proposed therefore that these five firms should be engaged to carry out asbestos surveys to the remainder of the Council's housing stock.

Each firm will be allocated an initial batch of properties to survey. Performance will be monitored on the initial batches (and subsequent batches) and work will be allocated to each firm in proportion to their performance. Engaging the five firms will maximise surveying capacity and allow for sanction against poor performance without inordinate delay to the programme.

The Executive agreed to approve the appointment of the undernoted firms to carry out asbestos surveys to the remainder of the Housing Stock on the terms set out in the report:

- Alcontrol On-Site-Services
- Connaught
- Enviraz Surveys Ltd.
- Property Techtonics
- Redhill Analysts

14. Community Mediation Service

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on tenders received for the provision of a Community Mediation Service in North Ayrshire.

Community Mediation is a means of resolving neighbour disputes and antisocial behaviour by assisting the parties involved to reach an agreed solution to the problem. The provision of a Community Mediation Service is an important element of the North Ayrshire Antisocial Behaviour Strategy.

At its meeting on 12 May 2009, the Executive gave approval for a tendering exercise to be carried out for the provision of a Community Mediation Service in North Ayrshire. Subsequently, tenders were received from Sacro and Mediation Scotland. Following an evaluation exercise, the offer by Mediation Scotland is considered to be the most economically advantageous to the Council.

The Executive agreed to accept the offer from Mediation Scotland to provide a Community Mediation Service in North Ayrshire from 1 October 2009 to 31 March 2011, with an option for one year's extension subject to funding and performance, as set out in the report.

15. Exclusion of the Public and Press

The Executive 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 items of business on the grounds indicated in terms of Paragraphs 1 (in respect of item 16), and 4 and 8 (in respect of item 17) of Part I of Schedule 7A of the Act.

16. Shared Services - Regulatory Services

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Protective) on proposals to develop a pan Ayrshire Service in respect of the delivery of Building Standards, Environmental Health, and Trading Standards.

Since 2006, the three Ayrshire Councils, through the shared services agenda, have been working closer together in the delivery of Building Standards, Environmental Health and Trading Standards. Areas of best practice have been shared and service improvements implemented.

The work undertaken to date has added value to the services provided by all three Ayrshire Councils and discussions are ongoing to identify areas where this shared service approach can be further developed. It has become clear that the majority of services offered to the public in these areas are duplicated across each Council. The number of services uniquely provided by one Council is small and therefore there is an opportunity to consolidate on a pan-Ayrshire basis.

At a meeting of the Joint Ayrshire Shared Services Group on 13 March 2009, the three Chief Executives were remitted to explore options for the future development of shared services within regulatory services. Senior officers from each of the Ayrshire local authorities therefore met on 13 May 2009 to consider the progress of joint working to date and to assess options for the further development of shared services within regulatory services. Subsequently, at a meeting of the Joint Ayrshire Shared Services Group held on 19 June, it was agreed by all three Council Leaders that the preferred way forward was to establish a Joint Ayrshire Regulatory Service involving all three services, managed by one lead Council.

The report provided details of the services provided by each of the three Councils in the areas of Building Standards, Environmental Health and Trading Standards, set out the respective staffing structures of each authority in these areas, and summarised the results of the options appraisal exercise presented to the Joint Ayrshire Shared Services Group.

The Executive discussed the need to ensure that local service provision is protected, and service standards maintained, under the proposed joint arrangements.

The Executive agreed (a) to approve the establishment of a Joint Ayrshire Regulatory Service involving the three service areas identified within the report, managed by one lead Council; (b) that further work be undertaken to progress the development of a joint service, including the determination of a lead authority; and (c) to receive a further report detailed report at a future meeting.

17. Largs Slipway Project

Submitted report by the Chief Executive which provided an update on the project to develop a new slipway at Largs.

Over a number of years, the Scottish Sailing Institute (SSI) based in Largs, in association with the Royal Yacht Association (RYA) and SportScotland, and with support from North Ayrshire Council, has successfully organised and hosted local, regional and national sailing events in Largs.

Largs will host international events such as the World Laser Event scheduled for July 2010 and other events in 2011 as part of the run up to the 2012 Olympics. The RYA and EventScotland have made it clear that the development of updated launching facilities is a pre-condition of their endorsement and support for the SSI securing and hosting such events in future. To that end a project to construct a new slipway at Largs has been developed, involving a number of funding partners including the Council.

Planning permission for the construction of a new slipway at Largs was granted in May 2008 and the contract for the proposed development put out to tender in December of that year. A contractor was subsequently selected by the funding partners but, due to continuing uncertainty over a bid for funding from the European Union towards the costs of the project, the contract has yet to be awarded. A decision on the funding bid is expected in the next few months. Meantime the report set out contingency arrangements to ensure that the project is progressed.

The Executive agreed to support the proposals set out in the report to take the project forward.

The meeting ended at 4.30 p.m.