

Support Services Committee
6 February 1996

Irvine, 6 February 1996 - At a Meeting of the Support Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

David O'Neill, Alan Munro, Patrick Browne, James Clements, John Donn, Margaret Hight, James Jennings and David Munn.

In Attendance

The Chief Executive, the Director of Financial Services, the Head of Corporate Business, the Personnel Services Manager and an Administration Officer (Miss Hewitt).

Chair

Mr. O'Neill in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Stewart Dewar, Elliot Gray and George Steven.

1. Revenue Budget 1996/97

(Previous Minute Reference: Corporate Strategy Committee 22/1/96)

On 22 January 1996 the Corporate Strategy Committee agreed to refer a report on the draft budget for North Ayrshire to the Committee. Copies of the report were circulated at the meeting. The report advises that the draft budget is above the capping limit advised by the Scottish Office and that savings will be required to prevent capping.

The Committee agreed that the Chair and Vice-Chair together with the appropriate Officers establish how the savings target can be achieved and report to a Special Meeting of the Committee.

2. Water and Sewerage Charges

(Previous Minute Reference: North Ayrshire Council 20/12/95)

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services on proposed arrangements for the billing and collection of water and sewerage charges on behalf of the West of Scotland Water Authority. Copies of the report had previously been circulated.

On 20 December 1995 the Council expressed its concern over Scottish Office proposals that the reimbursement of administration costs for the billing and collection of these charges would be at the rate of 4% of the water service charges collected and representations were subsequently made to the Secretary of State on this issue.

The West of Scotland Water Authority have now submitted alternative proposals

where each Council would enter into an Agency Agreement for:-

- (a) the billing, collection and enforcement of Council Tax, water and sewerage charges at a rate of £4.75 per household; and
- (b) the provision of information on occupancy, rateable values, etc. for the non domestic rates system at a rate of £1 per domestic household.

These arrangements would be subject to service level agreements and would cover a three year period. They represent a substantial improvement to those contained in the Scottish Office Draft Regulations and provide an acceptable reimbursement of administration costs.

The Committee agreed (a) in principle to enter into an Agency Agreement on the above terms for the billing and recovery of domestic water and sewerage charges and the provision of billing information relating to non domestic properties; and (b) to authorise the Director of Financial Services to negotiate an appropriate service level agreement with the West of Scotland Water Authority.

3. Banking Arrangements

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services on authorised signatories for the operation of the Council's bank accounts. Copies of the report had previously been circulated.

On 25 October 1995 the Council agreed that the Director of Financial Services negotiate with the Royal Bank of Scotland on the terms of their appointment as lead bankers for the Council for period to 31 March 1997 and that arrangements be made for the selection by competitive tender of a banker from 1 April 1997 onwards. The Royal Bank of Scotland has asked which Officers of the Council will be authorised to operate the Council's bank accounts for the signing of cheques, arranging of borrowing facilities by overdraft, etc.

In addition, the Council may also require to finance short-term cash requirements by overdraft, taking advantage of overdraft rates of interest when the money market rates are high. The Treasury Management Plan will be submitted to the Council in due course.

The Committee agreed (a) to designate as authorised signatories for banking transactions the Director of Financial Services, the Head of Accountancy Services and the Head of Revenue Services; (b) that the Principal Accountant be an authorised signatory in respect of the Council's Loan Fund; (c) that the Royal Bank of Scotland be requested to provide overdraft facilities to a maximum of £3,000,000; and (d) that the Co-operative Bank be included on the list of banks to be invited to tender as the Council's banker for the period from 1 April 1997.

4. Local Government Reorganisation: Matching of Individuals to Posts in the New Councils

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on Staff Commission Circulars 8/95, 9/95 and the addendum to 9/95. Copies of the report and circulars had previously been circulated.

Circular 9/95 provides guidance on the process of comparing posts in the new organisational structures with the employees who are to be transferred. The matching process applies mainly to management posts above a salary of spinal column point 34 (£19,284). Exceptions to this rule are permitted. Employees below this level should be transferred to the Council on their present grades.

The appeals procedure for employees who are aggrieved with their matching proposal is detailed in Circular 8/95. The Staff Commission advice has been incorporated into a local procedure for matching employees to posts in North Ayrshire Council. The process of matching and transferring employees to posts in the Council's structure has been carried out and employees have been advised of their matched posts.

The cut off point for matching employees to posts in the Council's new structure has been applied to posts with a maximum spinal column point of 34 (£19,284) and above but that in certain directorates this point has been raised to posts carrying a maximum of spinal column point of 45 (£25,614).

In noting the terms of the report the Committee agreed to appoint a Sub-Committee with powers comprising the Chair, Vice-Chair, the ex-officio Members and the Chair of the appropriate Service Committee, to determine any appeals against matching which may arise.

5. Detriment Regulations

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on the Local Government (Compensation for Reduction of Remuneration on Reorganisation)(Scotland) Regulations 1995 known as "Detriment Regulations". Copies of the report had previously been circulated.

The Regulations allow for a compensation payment where an employee has suffered a reduction in remuneration as a result of reorganisation. This payment is mandatory, is of a fixed amount and is payable over three years in equal instalments. The total amount of compensation payable is a sum equal to three times the difference between the annual rate of remuneration at the date of leaving employment with the old authority and that payable at the start of employment with the new Council. Whilst the Regulations apply to all employees with the exception of classroom teachers and head teachers in a supervisory capacity, further guidance is required on the standing of individual terms of employment of transferred employees.

It is considered, however, that there is a clear case for the application of the Detriment Regulations where employees secure a post following open

advertisement.

The Committee agreed (a) that the Personnel Services Manager report to the Committee on the position regarding the Detriment Regulations and individual contractual terms of employment once the application of these has been clarified; (b) to approve the application of the Detriment Regulations to those Officers in Local Government and from New Town Corporations where their appointments are secured following open advertisement; and (c) otherwise to note the terms of the report.

6. Severance Arrangements

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on the Local Government (Compensation for Redundancy) (Scotland) Regulations 1994 and the Local Government (Compensation for Redundancy or Premature Retirement on Reorganisation) (Scotland) Regulations 1995. Copies of the report had previously been circulated.

These Regulations give the Council discretion to make severance payments in cases of redundancy or retirement which is in the interest of the efficiency of the service and provide compensation to employees who lose employment due to redundancy.

The Committee agreed to remit with powers to a Sub-Committee comprising the Chair, Vice-Chair and the Chair of the Corporate Strategy Committee, to approve severance terms to employees other than teachers on the following basis:-

- (a) that the discretionary provision of the 1994 Regulations be adopted for employees aged under 50 years;
- (b) in the case of employees aged over 50 years, that the discretionary provision in relation to added years under the Local Government (Compensation for Premature Retirement) (Scotland) Regulations 1979 should be made available;
- (c) that the maximum discretionary provisions of the 1995 Regulations be adopted where severance results directly from Local Government Reorganisation with each employee exercising the choice between “added years” and the maximum compensation payment as they see fit; and
- (d) that in the case of the 1995 Regulations, employees approaching compulsory retirement age at 65 years i.e. aged 63 or 64 years, the maximum level of discretionary payment be restricted in accordance with advice from COSLA.

7. Scheme for Relocation Assistance

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager together with a proposed scheme for relocation assistance. Copies of the report and scheme had previously been circulated.

The Council has agreed to adopt the National Schemes of Conditions of Service relating to travelling and disturbance allowances for Officers transferring during the shadow year for Chief Officers and APT & C Staff. The National Scheme provides for

removal, storage and legal fees and the provision of temporary lodging allowances where two homes have to be maintained as a result of changes in employment location.

There is no upper financial limit on the total relocation package available. It is therefore proposed that a maximum limit of £5,500 plus VAT be fixed, including allowances for temporary lodgings. The proposed Scheme would also provide for cases of “exceptional hardship”. The Committee were of the view that the Chair and Vice-Chair should be consulted prior to determining such cases.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the proposed Relocation Scheme, being that incorporated in the National Schemes of Conditions of Service but with an upper financial limit of £5,500 plus VAT; (b) that the amended Scheme be applied to employees transferred and recruited to the Council whose terms of employment are governed by Manual Worker, Craft Operative, Chief Officer and APT & C Staffs Conditions of Service; and (c) that the Personnel Services Manager, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, determine claims for additional allowances due to “exceptional hardship”.

8. Housing Services Directorate: Staffing Structure:

(a) Capital Programme Section

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services on proposed alterations to the structure of his Capital Programme Section. Copies of the report had previously been circulated.

The structure of the Housing Services Directorate has been developed in two stages dealing initially with the Heads of Service and then with middle management posts. In the Directorate's Capital Programme Section which deals with private sector housing activity, the strategic and operational level posts have now been approved and the staffing level of day to day operations now requires to be addressed.

This work is carried out principally by staff in Cunninghame District Council's Environmental Health Department and while the function will transfer over on 1 April 1996 no staff will transfer with it.

Two posts now require to be established to deal with the inspections, repairs and monitoring required. The funding for these posts can be made available from posts currently held vacant within the establishment of the Housing Services Directorate. Further administrative and clerical support will be required for this section but the extent of this needs to be clarified.

The Committee agreed (a) to the establishment of two posts of Grant Monitoring Officer at Technical Grade 4 (£15,438 - £17,127) to deal with all aspects of inspections, advice and monitoring of Non-HRA Capital Expenditure; (b) that these posts be filled as soon as possible; and (c) that a report on the administrative and clerical support required be submitted to a future meeting.

(b) Amendment of Staffing Structure

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on the proposed establishment of a supernumerary post of Senior Property Services Officer within the Housing Services Directorate. Copies of the report had previously been circulated.

The responsibilities in relation to the Non-HRA Housing Capital Programme undertaken by an Assistant Director of Environmental Health of Cunninghame District Council will be transferred to the Housing Service Directorate and there is no suitable established post in this structure to which this Officer could reasonably be matched. In view of the lack of available expertise within the Housing Services Directorate and the availability of this knowledge and skill, it is proposed that a supernumerary post of Senior Property Services Officer be created as an interim measure for a period of just over one year. The funding of this post will be met from Non-HRA Expenditure.

After a full discussion, the Committee agreed (a) to the establishment of a post of Senior Property Services Officer on salary grade PO8 (£23,850 - £25,614) on a supernumerary basis of a period not exceeding one year and one month; and (b) that on termination of the workload of the supernumerary post, the Officer be released from the Council's Service on a voluntary basis, the post being surplus to the Council's requirements at that time.

9. Social Work Directorate: Criminal Justice Services

(Previous Minute Reference: Social Work Committee 24/1/96)

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on the staffing of Criminal Justice Services within the Social Work Directorate. Copies of the report had previously been circulated.

On 24 January 1996 the Social Work Committee agreed (a) to proposals for the development of Criminal Justice Services within the Social Work Directorate in light of additional finance secured from the Scottish Office; and (b) to recommend to the Support Services Committee (i) that the Co-ordinator post be redesignated Principal Officer (Criminal Justice Services) and be regraded from PO5 to PO11; and (ii) that a new post of Senior Social Worker be established on salary grade PO2.

Further consideration is also required in relation to the support staffing necessary and this will be dependent on the additional grant funding available. The funding of these developments will be met in full by the Scottish Office and will have no direct cost to the Council.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the above recommendations of the Social Work Committee; and (b) that the Personnel Services Manager report on the further support staffing required.

10. Car Leasing and Loan Scheme

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services on car leasing and assisted car purchase schemes. Copies of the report had previously been circulated.

A car lease scheme is available to both Strathclyde Regional Council and Cunninghame District Council employees who are authorised car users. There are currently a total of 1,500 members of the Strathclyde scheme but there are no members in the Cunninghame District scheme. It is proposed to continue with the current Strathclyde scheme and extend it to North Ayrshire as an interim measure.

Under the existing arrangements authorities can make advances to employees for the purchase of cars for use in the performance of their duties. This assisted car purchase scheme is used particularly in Cunninghame District. The conditions, including rates of interest, are covered by National Agreements and the present rate of interest is close to the anticipated Loans Fund rate for North Ayrshire.

The Committee agreed (a) that the terms and conditions applying to car leases taken out by employees transferring to North Ayrshire Council be continued; (b) as interim measures, that the Council adopt the terms and conditions of Strathclyde Regional Council Car Lease Scheme, with vehicles to be provided under the existing contract entered into by Strathclyde Regional Council and also the CDC assisted car purchase scheme; and (c) that the Director of Financial Services report on any proposed adjustments to (i) the car leasing scheme; and/or (ii) the assisted car purchase scheme for authorised car users to a future meeting.

11. Appointment of Proper Officers

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the appointment of proper officers of the Council. Copies of the report had previously been circulated.

In terms of Sections 193 and 194 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 the Council may give authority to proper officers to make or issue Notices or Orders under any enactment on behalf of the Council and to execute any Deed for purchase, sale, lease or otherwise of property pertaining to the authority. It is proposed that three officers be designated and appointed to ensure that in the event of absence there will always be a Proper Officer available.

The Committee agreed to approve the appointment of the Chief Executive, the Depute Chief Executive and the Legal Services Manager as Proper Officers of North Ayrshire Council in term of Section 193 and 194 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

12. Ardrossan: Seafield Residential School: Proposed Lease

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the proposed lease by Strathclyde Regional Council of Seafield Residential School, Ardrossan to Quarriers Homes. Copies of the report had previously been circulated.

In terms of Section 55(2)(b) of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994 Strathclyde Regional Council must obtain the Council's consent before entering into the contract for a 25 year lease to Quarriers Homes of the school because the rent, if capitalised, would exceed £250,000.

The Committee agreed to grant consent to Strathclyde Regional Council to proceed with the contract to Quarriers Homes for the lease of the Seafield Residential School.

The Meeting ended at 2.55 p.m.